CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

FEBRUARY 1984 75p.
No.1

THE MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW



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ZX Spectrum 48K **£7.50**

Written by Graham Stafford.

HALLS OF THE THINGS

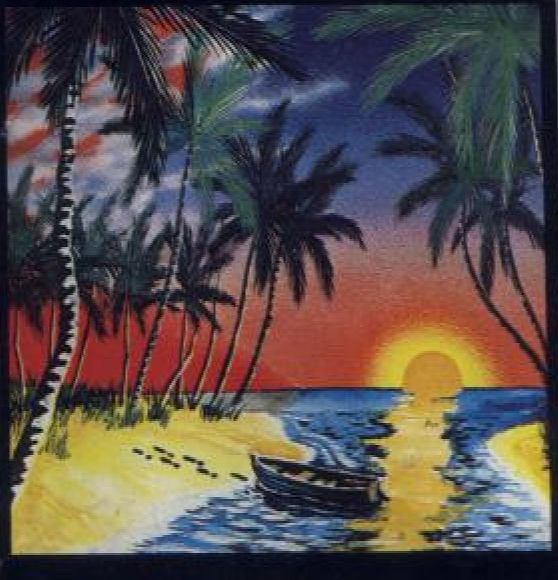
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Written by Neil Mottershead, Simon Brattel and Martin Horsley.

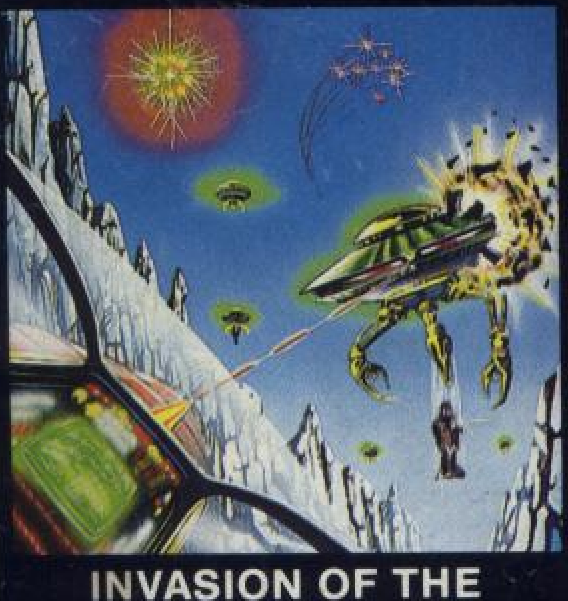


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ISSUE No. 1 FEBRUARY 1984

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Crash Micro is published monthly by ***Newsfield Ltd.***
PO Box 10, Ludlow,
Shropshire SY8 1DB
Tel: 0584 5620

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Mono printing, typesetting & finishing by
Feb Edge Litho Ltd.
3-4 The Oval, London E2.
Colour printing by
Allan-Denver Web Offset Ltd.
Northfield, Milton Keynes.
Colour origination by
Scan Studios, 44 Wallace Rd.
London N1
Distributed by
Wells Gardner, Darton & Co.
Faygate, Horsham, W. Sussex
Tel: 029383 444

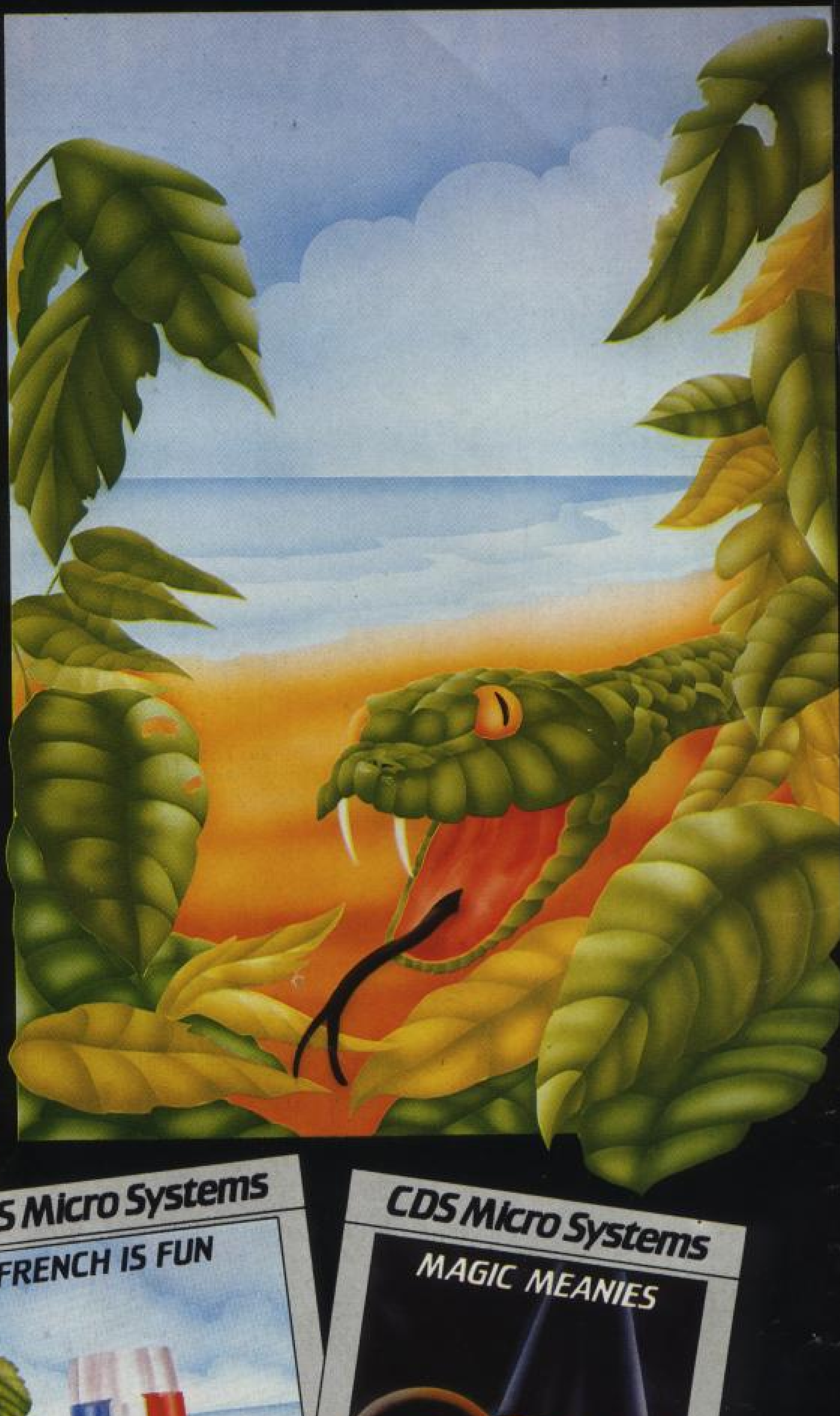
Subscriptions: 12 issues £9.00 UK Mainland (post included)
Europe: 12 issues £15 (post included).
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Cover illustration: Oliver Frey

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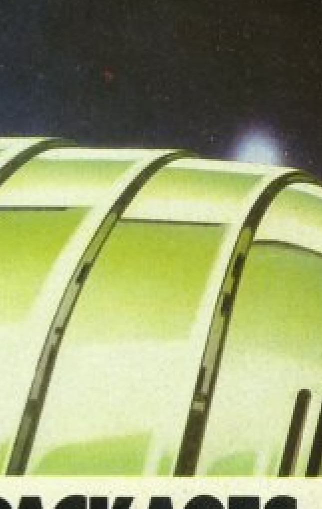
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NEW GAME OF THE MONTH



3D DEATH-CHASE

Producer: **Micromega**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.95**
Author:
Mervyn Estcourt

Here's a new game which really does deserve the 3D prefix! Considering that it's packed into 16K, this has to be the best yet road race type game for the Spectrum.

The story lines goes: It is 2501, one hundred years after the Great War and the North American continent is ruled by mighty warlords in constant conflict over forest territory. You are one of the elite mercenaries, Riders of the Big Bikes...

And so on...

But who cares about the story line? All our reviewers were stunned by the game and that's what counts! What you get is a view over the Big Bike's handlebars, with a pair of black leather clad hands gripping them. Before you is what appears to be a reasonably empty landscape with a couple of small trees in the distance. But as soon as you accelerate the picture changes. The trees suddenly seem to multiply — and they're big!

Steering your bike between the trees, you chase after two other riders, firing photon bolts at them. A helicopter hovers around, occasionally landing. This too can be shot if you're good.

And that's about it. Except for the night patrol...



CRITICISM

'This is an extremly simple idea for a game, and utterly compelling to play. Once you shoot up two riders the game automatically switches to night patrol. It's a little harder to see the trees, and if you get through that, sector two day patrol adds a tank as well as the helicopters. The main problem is braking, not that you can't, just that somehow you forget to in the excitement. Great graphics!'

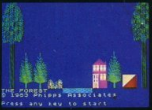
'There is a range indicator to let you know how close to the other bikes you are, but I never even noticed it because the 3D effect is so good you can fire by instinct as you would in real life. The graphics of the bolts firing away are very good and so is the explosion when you hit something, so realistic that the bits seem to fly up over your shoulders. Slamming into a tree at full tilt is quite an experience. This game is dangerously addictive to play.'

'Return of the Jedi has nothing on this. The chase through the trees is breathtaking — *quite literally. Fantastic graphics, exceptionally smooth movement, the bike handles really well (you can see the rider's hands turning the handlebars). Buy it!'*

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: very good, 1 for left, zero for right, 8/9 brake acclerate, and any bottom row key for fire
Joystick option: Kempston
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: superb
Sound: very good
Skill levels: each sector gets harder
Lives: 3 **General rating:** excellent

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	92%
Playability	95%
Getting started	85%
Addictive qualities	98%
Value for money	92%
Overall	92%



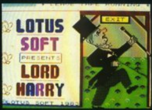
The Forest



Bugaboo (the Flea)



Valhalla



Lord Harry

AND MORE TOP GAMES REVIEWED............

CRASH, BANG, WALLOP

It's difficult to know what to say in the first editorial of a new magazine. Apart from the usual formalities like, 'Hi!' and, 'Hope you enjoy it,' there are tons of other things to say, but I'll keep it fairly short!

Perhaps the first item is the magazine's name. As editor of **CRASH** I've been surprised by how few people in the software industry have pointed out that it is a strange name, or that in computer terminology a *crash* is not a particularly **Good Thing.** In fact not a single person has said it yet, so perhaps I should keep quiet, but the name arrived, like most titles, in a flash and simply seemed right. I like to think it symbolises more the power and strength of the computer game than anything else. As a magazine title **CRASH** is short, sharp and to the point, and anyway it makes it the only computer magazine without the word *computer* stuck somewhere in it, and that must be worth some points!

REVIEWERS AND REVIEWING

'It is always important to realise that reviews are only personal preferences,' **Ian Sinclair** of **IJK** told a reporter from *Home Computing Weekly* last summer. His statement reflects the fears most software houses feel regarding games reviews.

The spokesman for another very well known software house told me at the PCW show recently that he had 'heaved' when he saw the details sent him by **CRASH** and went on to explain that his company's games have 'honest covers'. It transpired that he disapproved of trying to con people with exciting artwork that has little to do with the quality of graphics contained in the programs available, and our intention of having plenty of exciting artwork in the magazine was basically dishonest. But what seemed uppermost in his mind was the fear that reviewers didn't understand his games or play them well enough to be able to review them fairly. He told me he wouldn't be releasing review copies of new games until he could write the reviews himself.

These two opinions are nothing new, of course. The battle between reviewer and reviewed has been going on since the beginning of time. But they do underline two points which we at **CRASH** feel strongly about. Firstly: hardly anyone except a real first-timer on the Spectrum expects the game to look exactly like the art on the inlay. Whilst I have nothing at all against the 'honest cover' approach, I fail to see why covers should not be as exciting as possible. We're all used to LP and book covers being zappy and interesting. Why shouldn't computer games cassettes look as good? Probably one fair argument against would be that books and LPs can be read in the shop or heard on the radio, so you have a pretty good idea of what it is you're buying; whereas shop assistants aren't going to waste their time loading several cassettes for you to see, so you are very reliant on the description of the game and the artwork.

Which brings us to the second point; Reviews are all the more vital for the games software buyer because of the above.

Are reviewers unfair? Are they biased and incompetent? Would it be better for the programmers to write their own reviews? Well the latter is obviously not on. Artists are awful liars, and never so bad as when talking about their own work. Whatever the software houses may feel and say about reviews, they want them as much as the public want them. There is an obvious conflict — the player wants to be told **whether** the game's worth buying and the producer wants the player to be told that it **is** worth buying. Happily the conflict isn't always irreconcilable!

What this underlines is that from either side responsibility is placed on the reviewer to be honest, but he or she is only human, so the resulting review is bound to be a personal preference — how can it be otherwise? In fact that is the reviewer's strength — he is likely to say what he thinks no matter how much pressure he's under from the advertiser. Pleasing the software producer is not a reviewer's task. Besides, if you listen to software people they'll all tell you that such-and-such a game got terrible and unfair reviews yet it sold fantastically, thus proving what *they* already knew; reviewers don't know what they're talking about.

At **CRASH** we have tried to bear all this in mind. Our responsibility seems heightened because our major concern is reviewing games. That is why all the major reviews and criticisms are undertaken by at least three reviewers. In this way we hope a fair balance will be maintained, that the resulting review will even out personal preferences. And the reviews are done by games players, not professional reviewers in the usual sense. So if we say a game isn't liked, it isn't just because the reviewer was tired and bad-tempered because the cat just peed on the carpet or the wife walked out last night. And if a game is liked, it isn't because the manufacturer told us it was good.

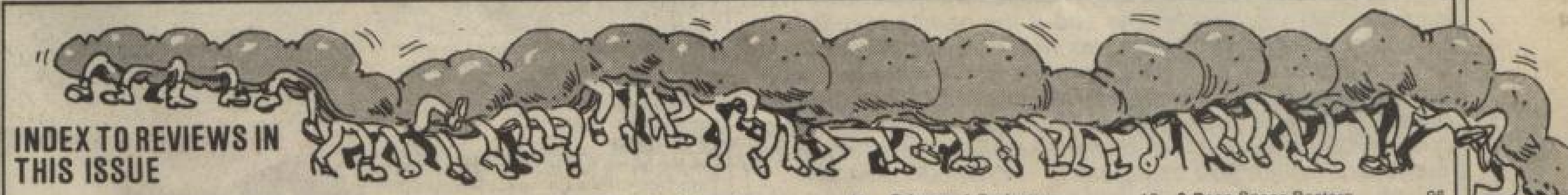
Anyway, in the long run the readers of **CRASH** — yes that's you — will be the final critic. You can write and tell us what you think, or you can use the **CRASH HOTLINE** and vote on those games that don't seem to get the chart placings they deserve, and if you're really keen, you can always have a go at the Reviewers' Competition in this issue.

ROGER KEAN



ZXMAS MICROFAIR

The 3 and 4 December saw London's Ally Pally packed with eager crowds for the ninth ZX



INDEX TO REVIEWS IN THIS ISSUE

Microfair with 130 companies taking part. Notable absentees were **Imagine, Bug-Byte** and **Virgin**, but among the biggies **Quicksilva, DK Tronics, Artic, Mikrogen, Carnell, CCS, CDS** and **Silversoft** all had stands. **Vortex** created great interest with *Android 2*, shown for the first time, as did **Fantasy** with their follow up to *The Pyramid*. Pole Position fans were treated to *Speed Duel* from **DK Tronics**, *Grand Prix Driver*, from **Britannia**, *Road Racer* from **Thorn EMI** and tantalised by the non-existent *Chequered Flag* from **Psion.** But the most popular draw was **Micromega's** *Deathchase*.

Lots of *Manic Miner* fans were in search of the follow up *Jet Set Willy* from **Software Projects,** and as many wanted a glimpse of **Imagine's** *Stonkers* which hadn't been released in time. **Mikrogen** and **Artic** had a dramatic presence with numerous new games, and at **Gilsoft's** stand *The Quill* had many adherents; a new product written with *The Quill* made its first appearance — *Dennis Through The Drinking Glasses* by **Applications,** a story about the Prime Minster's husband.

Difficult and attractive *Wheelie* was visible next to *The Train Game* at **Mircosphere's** stand, and at **Phipps Associates** armchair sportsmen could go orienteering with *The Forest*. One of the bigger stirs was caused by **Digital Integration** with their superb jet fighter simulation game, *Fighter Pilot*. More about that in the next issue. **Abbex** were showing their new *Krakatoa* and **Carnell** let us glimpse the screen of *The Wrath of Magra*, due out soon. **Automata** held a noisy lucky dip where games were to be had for a pound apiece, and on the



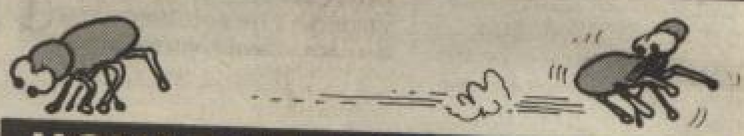
Crash Micro stand newcomers **Starzone Software** showed their *Zaxxan*, the much awaited Spectrum version of the famous arcade original.

Due to the lack of space it's impossible to cover even a fraction of the software on show at the ZX Microfair but you'll be able to catch up with it in the next issue of **CRASH.** The tenth ZX Microfair is at the same venue on the 4 February.

SEE US AT THE

10th ZX MICROFAIR

Saturday 4th February
Alexandra Palace



HOW THE RATINGS WORK

There has been much editorial argument over this first issue on how the new games should be rated — and indeed, even if they should be. One argument is that giving games a rating is too inaccurate. We've all become used to computer mags doing something like it, but a rating is of little use if it isn't clear on what it is based. Some give a score out of five, some out of eight, others out of twenty. And we've all seen the bad reviews that gives five stars and the good review that gives two!

However, due to pressure from many quarters we have given way on the ratings issue and decided to use it. In **CRASH** you will find two sections at the end of each review which can be cross-referenced to the review itself. The first is headed **COMMENTS** and gives factual information regarding the program and a very general rating based on the three individual reviewers' opinions.

Then come seven ratings. All the figures given are percentages. Some of the headings are used differently than you may have encountered in other magazines. Firstly the heading **USE OF COMPUTER.** Until now this has usually indicated the use of the Spectrum's capabilities by a program, **but we do not use it that way.** After all a really excellent game may only need 9K of memory — who's to say whether that is a good or poor use of the computer? Some games don't need fabulous graphics to be great games — who's to say a game with simple graphics isn't making full use of the computer? It isn't a relevant heading for the games player. So our **USE OF COMPUTER** means, how user-friendly is the game, have they provided sensible keyboard positions, are there plenty of joystick options?

The other heading which differs in meaning from the way it is used in other magazines is **PLAYABILITY,** which up till now has usually defined what we mean by **USE OF COMPUTER.** What we mean by **PLAYABILITY** is literally that — is it a fun game to play from the word go? After all, a game may be enjoyable but not very addictive in the long run. We think it's fair to point out the difference.

Use of computer
How good or bad are the control key positions; is there a good range of joystick options; is the program quick to respond to input? In other words can you **use** the computer easily with this program?

Graphics
Speaks for itself.

Playability
Is the game fun to play right from the start or, after a complicated start, does it become fun to play?

Getting started
Are the instructions clear both for control keys and game's objectives? How good or bad is the packaging and loading?

Addictive qualities
How long do you want to keep playing, and will you want to play it again?

Value for money
Speaks for itself

Overall
The six above percentages are averages out to a final figure.

All the above percentages are based on an average of the three individual reviewers' figures.

SCALE OF PERCENTAGE RATINGS

Under 30%	a waste of time
31-40%	generally poor, but may appeal for some
41-50%	average
51-55%	reasonable if type of game enjoyed
56-60%	good on most counts
61-70%	generally recommended
71-80%	highly recommended
81-90%	Knight of the British Empire
Above 90%	words fail ...

LETTERS»»»»»



***Letters pages** in magazines are always fun – it's fun to read, and they're fun to write. After all, we all need a chance to slag someone off now and again, and it's nice to give praise where it's due. So here is your chance. What do I want to know? Well for a start off you can tell me about the games you like (or hate), complain about programs that don't do what they're supposed to do, let other readers know some wrinkles you've learned or how to play games (like how to hit the subs in **Zzoom** without murdering the poor old refugees), and of course you can yell at our overworked reviewers for saying things with which you disagree!*

*Each month I'll be choosing the best letter from the postbag, and, as well as publishing it, **I'll send the writer £12 worth of software** of his or her choice (it can be two cassettes as long as they come within the £12). I've had to grovel on bended knee to the editor for this, so you'd better be grateful!*

*Send your letters to **Lloyd Mangram, CRASH Forum, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.** I can't promise to print everything that comes in because space is precious (I'm told) but I'll do my best.*

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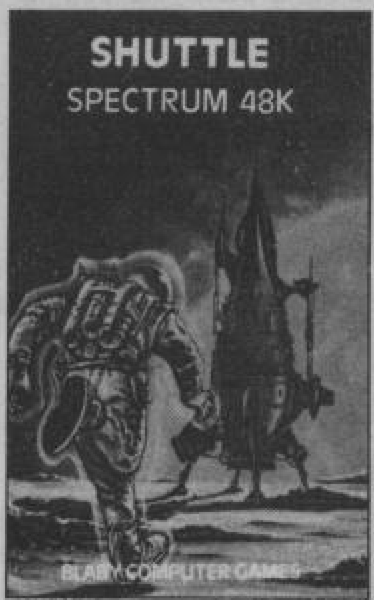
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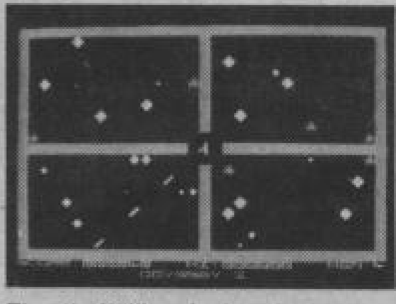
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Reviews

1st. PRIZE WINNER Games Section COMPUTECH 83

ODYSSEY 1

Producer: **Perfection Software**
Memory required: **16K**
Price: **£5.50**
Game type: **Arcade**
Author: **T Williams**



Timothy Williams' prize winning ODYSSEY 1. First screen is a 'Berserk' type.

Features: 100% machine code, on-screen scoring, hi score, freeze frame. This is a 3-part arcade game. Stage one is a berserk variation. You find your man at the centre of the screen, standing at the open crossing between four rooms, containing diamond shaped baffles and several purple robots or *'dreaded blind mutons'* as the inlay blurb describes them. Despite their blindness they fire away into the dark at random, keeping you on your toes. Your controls are asteroidal, ie rotate left and right, thrust and fire. The program allows for continuous fire/rotation/thrust. The walls of the rooms are electrified and must be avoided and we got the feeling some of the diamonds killed us off too. Otherwise it's fairly easy to kill off the mutons, which leads you into stage two.

Now you're faced with an *Arcadia* copy. Staggered rows of alien ships sail across the screen from left to right and your ship can move across the bottom of the screen or thrust up to avoid the wedges of aliens as they get lower. At first it all seems pretty easy to hit them, but every ship hit turns into a falling missile. A clever move this, since it forces you to move the instant after firing — and meaner still, the missiles don't vanish when they hit the ground, but wrap vertically round the screen. So the more ships you hit the more the screen fills with flying weaponry.

Stage three pits you against pterodactyl-like creatures with strange habits — but we won't spoil your fun and tell you what happens when you shoot one.

Critical comments:

Here's a collection of what our three reviewers had to say.

"The idea of putting three types of arcade game into one is quite good, but of course, it depends on whether you like the type of games chosen, and more importantly, whether each is well done. In this case I think it works quite well."

"The graphics in this game are all quite small, ie one character size."

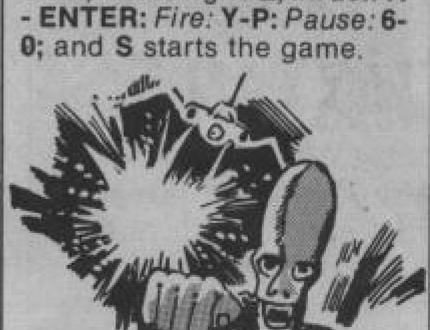
"Odyssey 1 packs quite a lot into its 16K, but that does tend to restrict the quality of the graphics, which are not very detailed."

"The graphics could prove a drawback since the game is now competing with games of a much higher graphic standard, although shoot-em-up games all tend to be pretty simple graphically."

"Odyssey 1 is a good mixture of well known arcade games which makes excellent use of colour, has very good graphics and there's a brilliant use of sound. Words fail this game— brilliant.'"

General:

Now as it does not provide a standard joystick option anyone using a programmable interface will have to load the game first to discover the keys: However they are: *rotate left:* **Caps Shift;** *rotate right:* **Z;** *thrust:* **H - ENTER:** *Fire:* **Y-P:** *Pause:* **6-0;** and **S** starts the game.



Use of computer	63%
Graphics	60%
Playability	80%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	83%
Value for money	75%
Overall	**72%**

The Warlock of Firetop Mountain

Producer: **Puffin Books**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **N Mottershead & S Brattel**

A number of book publishing houses are now moving into games software publishing none so famous perhaps as **Penguin**, who have released this new game under their **Puffin** name.

An interesting aspect of this program is that it has been produced for Penguin by **Crystal** (*Halls of the Things*) and adapted from the amazingly successful novel of the same name written by **Steve Jackson** and **Ian Livingstone.** The novels (there is a series) are really computer program flow diagrams in book form. Basically D&D format, the book keeps facing you with options where you can, say, pick one of three doors to go through. Whichever you choose, you will be given a page number to turn to, where the story continues, and it's quite different for each door. The idea here is that the computer game supports the book and you may buy either the tape on its own for **£5.50** or the combined pack of tape and novel for **£6.95.** Either way round it represents very good value.

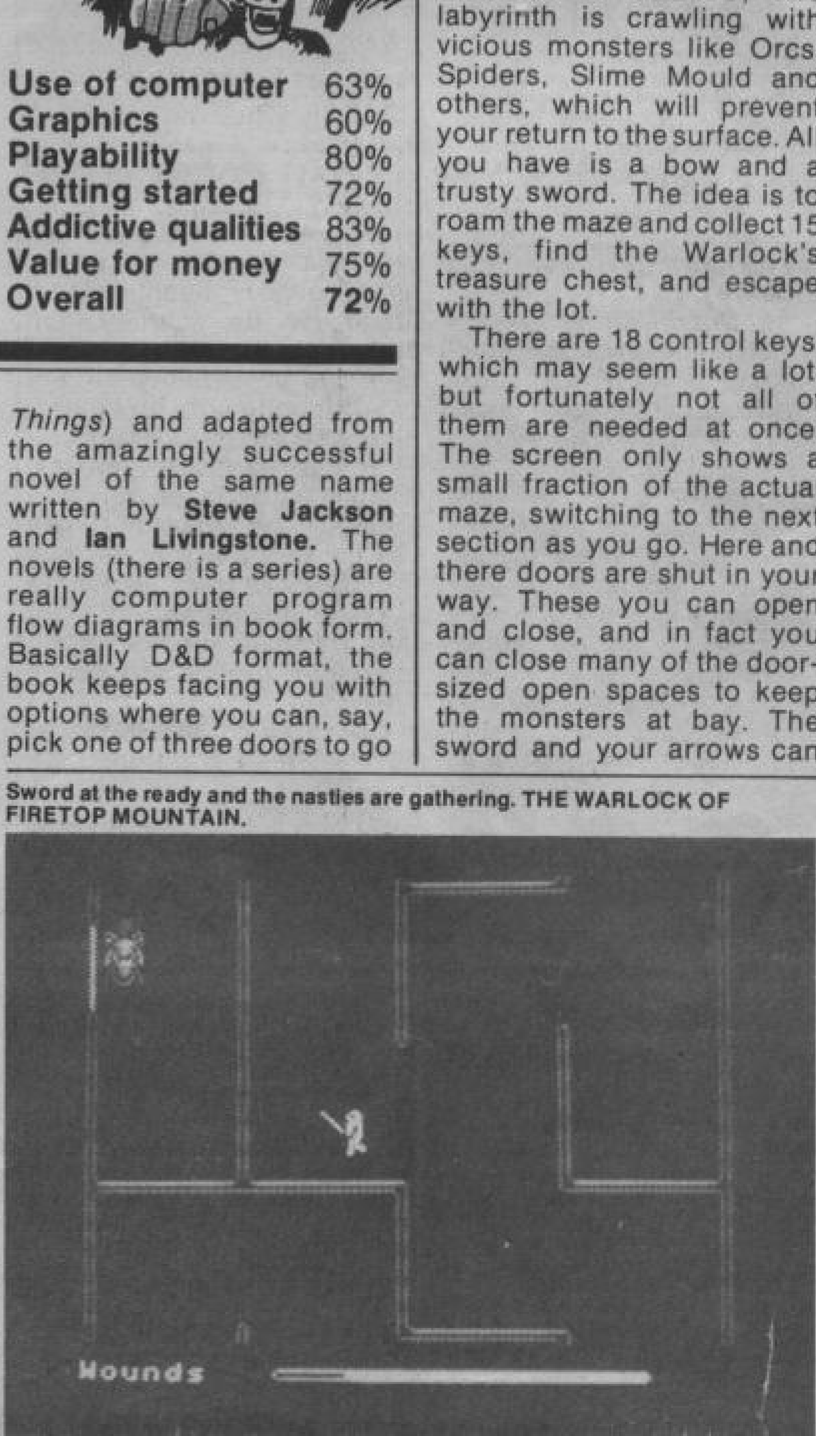
Crystal are famous for the notoriously difficult *Halls of the Things,* and *Dungeon Master. The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* is actually similar to *HOTT* but somewhat easier to play and in some ways much better.

THIS IS WHAT YOU DO

After a two minute load, a set of beautifully written instructions fill you in on the scenario and tell you the control keys. You are about to enter the vast and complex labyrinth beneath the gruesome crags of Firetop Mountain. Created by the evil Warlock to guard his fabulous treasure, the labyrinth is crawling with vicious monsters like Orcs, Spiders, Slime Mould and others, which will prevent your return to the surface. All you have is a bow and a trusty sword. The idea is to roam the maze and collect 15 keys, find the Warlock's treasure chest, and escape with the lot.

There are 18 control keys, which may seem like a lot, but fortunately not all of them are needed at once! The screen only shows a small fraction of the actual maze, switching to the next section as you go. Here and there doors are shut in your way. These you can open and close, and in fact you can close many of the door-sized open spaces to keep the monsters at bay. The sword and your arrows can

Sword at the ready and the nasties are gathering. THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN.



only be used in the direction you are facing, which is important because altering directions does not mean you are facing in that way. In the normal course of events, it's possible and as easy to walk backwards, but if an enemy threatens, you have to use the cursor keys as well as the direction keys to be sure of facing the monster.

GENERAL

There are four directional keys, **Z/X** for left/right and **N/M** for up/down, plus the cursors which make you face in the four directions. Additionally **A** fires arrows, **S** sheathes or draws the sword, **O** and **C** open and close doors, **SPACE** centres your man on the screen, **1** displays score and number of keys held, **2** pauses the game, **3** turns the sound on and **4** turns it off and **zero** makes your man face in the direction of movement.

CRITICISM

'This is very like *Halls of the Things*, but it's much more playable. I actually found the other one too difficult and confusing to play. In *Firetop* you're left alone long enough to get used to the keys and moving your man about so you feel confident about attacking the monsters, some of whom have swords and arrows like yourself.'

'The graphics are better than **HOTT**'s, *the monsters are more defined and realistic. Everything moves very smoothly and very fast. It needs a quick eye and hand co-ordination to survive monster attacks. Everything seems to happen in a blurr at first until you get the hang of it, and just when you have, more monsters come along.'*

'A quickly learned lesson is to shut doors behind your — it keeps some of the horrors away. My only quibble really is why did they have to put the up/down keys in a straight line and on the bottom row with the left/right? It does make life unnecessarily difficult at first — but it isn't a serious drawback.'

'I think Penguin have a winner with this one - when's the next one out?'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: complex but masterable
Use of colour: simple but very effective
Graphics: excellent and clear, but the man isn't fully animated
Sound: average, more could have been made of it, though the on/off facility is useful
Skill levels: one
Lives: one but with a percentage of wounding allowed
General rating: a very good, fast game and at its price, very good value

Use of computer:	**60%**
Graphics:	**75%**
Playability	**78%**
Getting started:	**75%**
Addictive qualities:	**65%**
Value for money:	**85%**
Overall:	**73%**

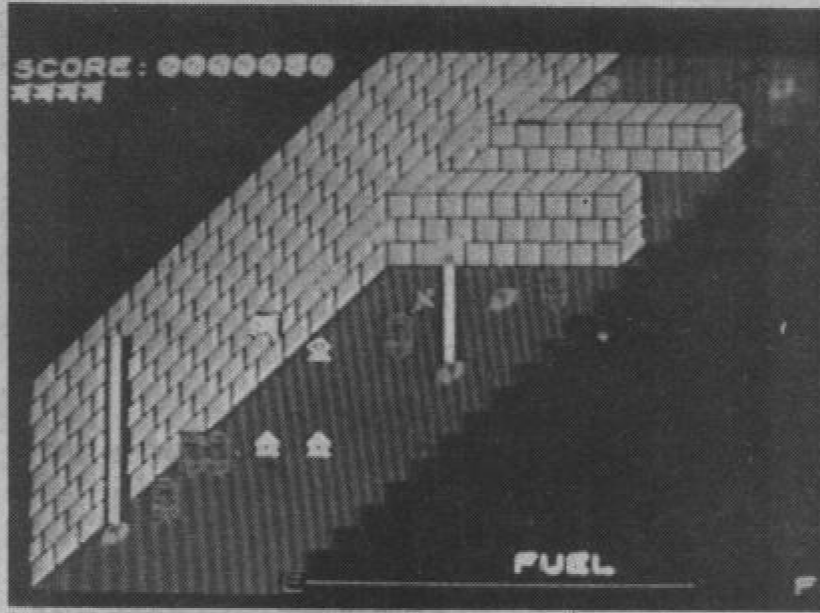
ZAXXAN

Producer: **Starzone**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **N Mardon**

Probably the most talked about arcade game of the year has been *Zaxxon*, the complex scramble type game with amazing 3D graphics. Its cult following has probably been helped along by its scarcity. Of course there are favourable versions available for Atari (very good in fact), but it has been a cherished dream of Spectrum software houses to have a go. So it's only fair to say at the outset that this version — the first of its kind for the Spectrum, is much simpler looking and moving than the arcade or Atari version. But it's pretty good anyway.

For a start off Starzone haven't been frightened of reproducing the three quarter angle view in blocky 3D; the shadow is there, and so are the features of the arcade original.

Your basic ojective is to take your attack fighter through the formidable defences of the Zaxxan fort and destroy it. These include numerous gun emplacements, fighter aircraft, laser force fields and walls of varying heights. As the walls approach you must fire your guns — the explosions give you the best indication of your flying height. Fuel runs



A first for the Spectrum, Star Zone's ZAXXAN.

out rapidly and is replenished, as in scramble games, by shooting up fuel dumps.

CRITICISM

'Here we have a *Zaxxon* copy, the first for the Spectrum, and which takes the same form as the original. The movement is a little jerky and the individual graphics are fairly small but easily identifiable. Colour is well used and the keyboard play is good, though the perspective makes it difficult. *Zaxxon* fans should enjoy this one.'

'Your fighter is a single character size so it doesn't do all that lovely banking on the turns that the original does, but in most respects this is avery good copy and difficult to play well. The character movement is jerky but not to its detriment, I thought, you soon get used to that. Perhaps it makes fine tuning a little hard. But how nice to have a Zaxxon copy for the Spectrum at last.'

'Pretty triffic on the whole, not as smooth as the original and still plenty of scope for improvement over the next few months, but I wouldn't miss out on this one! My one grouse is that they chose dark blue for the floor, the black shadow tends to get a bit lost. It helps though if you have your contrast right up on the telly.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: good
Joystick options: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive, but character movement makes it a little hard to judge accurately
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: nicely drawn and detailed, but jerky movement
Sound: fairly good
Lives: 5
General rating: good

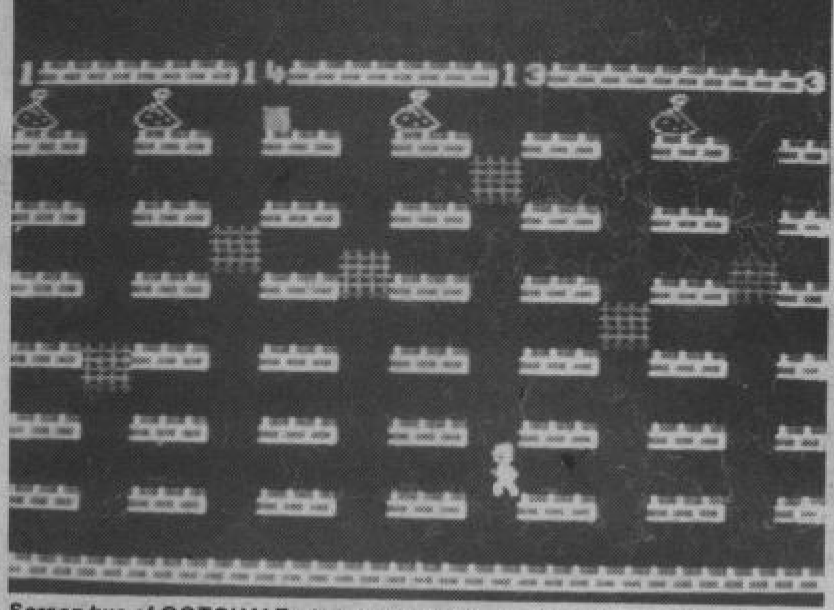
Use of computer	80%
Graphics	77%
Playability	68%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	80%
Overall	74%

GOTCHA!

Producer: **Blaby**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code compiled**
Author: **Garry Capewell**

The first thing you notice about *Gotcha!* is the attractive loading title page, a near exact replica of the inlay cover. Garry Capewell has written a number of successful Blaby games and this is another feather in his cap.

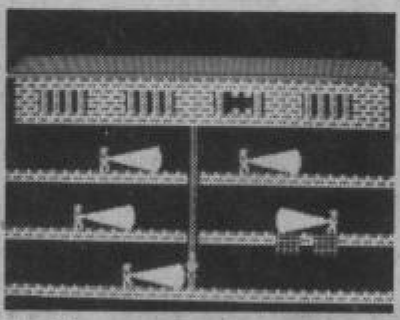
You're **Ernie**, an old lag who has just broken out of the nick. First obstacle to freedom is the searching guards outside the jail. There are five of them, their torch beams sweeping the various jail yards. Ernie must get safely past them and then through two jail gates that rise and fall very quickly. On this first screen you learn the cruel nature of *Gotcha!* — timing. It's crucial. The second screen shows you just how much too. A nightmare platform screen reminiscent of *Manic Miner* Willy's worst nightmare greets you. Seven levels with six green gates riding up and down the screen at a frightening pace, and all out of time with each other. On the platforms and other screens are all sorts of



Screen two of GOTCHA! Ernie is in th emiddle on the 2nd floor. Mind the gate!

stashed goodies such as swag bags, safes, Hitachi stereos, cameras and the like.

A mean programming trick here is that once committed to crossing the screen Ernie keeps on moving until he reaches the other side. Getting the right moment to move is the skill. Once on the move, however, reversing his direction can save you from instant crushing by a falling gate. But there's a copper about as well. If he nicks Ernie, it's back to the bottom of the screen.



Ernie in screen one, about to be caught in the glare of publicity.

CRITICISM

'One drawback in this game might have been the instant start between lives, which made *Barmy Burgers* slightly irritating, but here it matters less as all the start positions are in 'safe' areas and you're not against the clock. The graphics are reasonably large and if not fully animated then certainly very lively. Ernie himself is quite good, and it hurts when he gets beaten up by the copper. Not a game for arcade beginners!'

'In the shortish time I had to get this game reviewed I found it difficult to get very far through the second screen and ended up bathed in sweat! So I've still to discover what lies beyond. In its own way as difficult to play as Manic Miner. *Frrrrustrating!'*

'Every screen is alive and very busy, so it's an instant appeal game. Ernie could well become a hero — anyone who finds it easy to put up with his life would certainly be one. Not in any sense an easy game to play. Very addictive for the usual reasons — it looks as though it should be easy so you keep trying. Very good.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: sensible Z/X left/right, K/M up/down
Joystick options: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: reasonably smooth, compiled
Sound: continuous, good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 6
General rating: expert addicts only!

Use of computer	73%
Graphics	75%
Playability	80%
Getting started	73%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	78%
Overall	77%

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Producer: **Silversoft**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Jeremy Brown**

Mission Impossible is a Lander type game, where you must guide your shuttle craft down from the mothership to the planet surface below and rescue stranded miners from the colony, and then return them to the mothership. The title describes the game very well and only seasoned arcade players with lightning reflexes should apply for the pilot's job!

There are three landing pads on the planet and you must touch down accurately using your retro rockets to slow — a fast landing can kill. Four layers of moving asteroids must be avoided on the way down. Having collected a miner the return trip is even more fraught, for the sky has now filled up with enemy alien craft. The retro-rocket can be used as a laser to blast them away before the tricky docking manoeuvre with the mothership. Should you get through a few screens another hazard is introduced, a force field through which you must find your way.

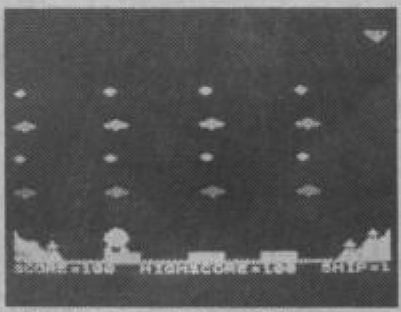
CRITICISM

'The setting up menu is excellent and all the various characters making up the instructions seem to turn inwards and fade as the game starts. This is a very hard game to master and needs quick reactions. Addictive.'

'The new Silversoft programs seems very user-friendly, with plenty of joystick options and good keyboard control — the games are all very user-cruel, but that's just as it should be! They call this one **Mission Impossible**, *and so it is, but it's worth mastering. Nice graphics and very playable.'*

'The lander type game isn't new, but this is a very good version with its own little touches which help to make it enjoyable to play. Once you get the hang the first few screens are merely difficult — then it really gets tough! Takes time to get good at it.'





safely down and only another hundred men to rescue — it looks like **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE.**

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: Z/X left/right, SPACE retro/fire
Joystick options: Kempston, AGF or Protek
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: good
Sound: average
Skill levels: up to you, but 3 speeds
Lives: 3
Screens: over 50
General rating: good and addictive, recommended

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	70%
Playability	85%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	80%
Overall	80%

BARRELDROP

Producer: **Games Machine**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Russel Vincent**

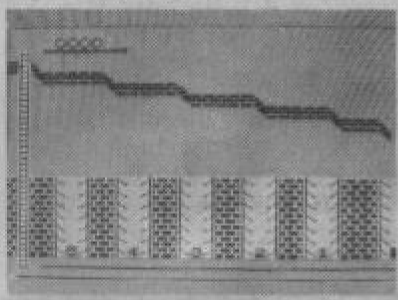
Barreldrop takes its name from what might be called the chorus line of this game. The two heroes are **Gordon and Flash** but there's no Ming in this epic! Gordon has blocked drainpipes, five of them in fact, and he's discovered a rather novel way of clearing them. He stands on the roof with five barrels, rolls them down the incline and tries to get them to fall down the blocked pipes. How on earth this is supposed to clear them, goodness knows!

However, it seems to do the trick. Unfortunately if he doesn't get the barrel exactly down the centre of a pipe it gets lost. Successful rolls are returned to him for another go. This is where Flash comes in. He's a dog who appears round the corner — sometimes. If he's visible and Gordon misplaces a barrel Flash will rescue it and return it up the ladeer to him.

Successfully clearing a screen results in another event, sometimes a riddle sometimes an arcade episode like getting Gordon safely across a floor in which some of the tiles are electrified. If you manage this, it's back to the chorus line again and more barrels to roll, more drains to be cleared.

CRITICISM

'I thought Barreldrop was a bit simple and boring — that was before a glass of Smirnov. The inlay only tells you that there's a surprise in store if you get five drains cleared. I was presented with a riddle which asked: What is a fourth defining measurement, an entity which never dies, but sees the end of all things? After a glass of Smirnov I realised I knew the anser (I was right too) and the next lot of drains seemed harder to clear (not just the drink!) because it's quite easy to mistime it, and damned Flash seems to appear less and less often. In fact *Barreldrop* is not simple and has enough bits and pieces to prevent boredom from setting in at all.'



'Where's the damned dog?'

'It's quite an original idea, a sort of games compendium in which nothing is exactly difficult, but there's so much of it you'll never get through. Having cleared the first screen I was asked to shoot down ten aliens with five lives in a sort of glaxian game. Neat graphics throughout. I cleared another barreldrop screen and had to walk Gordon over an electrified floor — he fried, I died. Only one life seems a little unfair. Fun though.'

'Good graphics, plentiful sound, loads of action. It



should be a winner. I must say that I enjoyed it, but the fact that there isn't a concentrated effort on one subject may spoil the fun for the hardened arcade addict. Nevertheless, good value, fun, and a wide age group appeal.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: vary between sections, but generally sensible
Joystick options: none
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: very good, all colours used
Graphics: detailed, reasonably smooth
Sound: good
Screens: many
Lives: 1
General rating: good value, perhaps low on addictivity

Use of computer	65%
Graphics	65%
Playability	70%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	54%
Value for money	68%
Overall	65%

HOP, SKIP & JUMP

The Game Lords take a leap for the TOP

On the press day for September's **Personal Computer World Show** at the Barbican in London, **Quicksilva** who style themselves *The Game Lords*, stole a march by holding a press show for their latest batch of games, aimed firmly at the Christmas market. We were treated to a champagne breakfast which included eggs, bacon, sausage and croissants besides a glass of champagne or Bucks Fizz (the drink, not the group). Champagne so early in the morning in obviously designed to go to the head and leave the reviewer with a warm glow towards his hosts. In Quicksilva's case and after such charming hospitality, it's pleasing to be able to say that among the five games on offer for the Spectrum, two are in the top class, and may well be among the top sellers this year, and one, *Games Designer* is certainly a new departure in games software. But we predict great things for *Bugaboo (The Flea)* and *Soft Solid 3D Ant Attack*.

Bugaboo (The Flea)

Producer: **Quicksilva**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Paco & Paco (Indescomp)**

The first unusual thing about this game is that it isn't a British program. Authors **Paco & Paco** are Spanish, and Quicksilva are hoping for more games from them in the future. That shouldn't be any problem as far as popularity goes — *Bugaboo the Flea* is going to be a big hit. Not only is it beautifully drawn and animated, but the colours on the screen are as burningly bright as has ever been seen on the Spectrum.

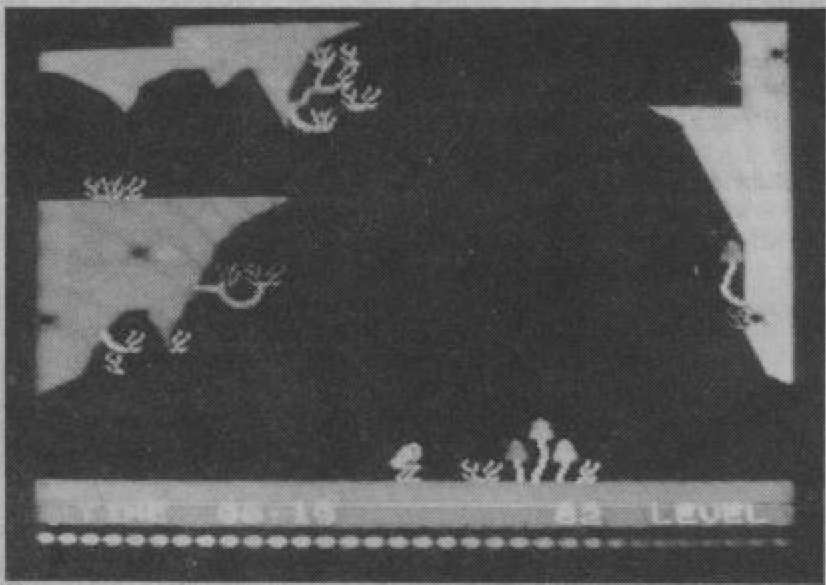
THIS IS WHAT YOU DO

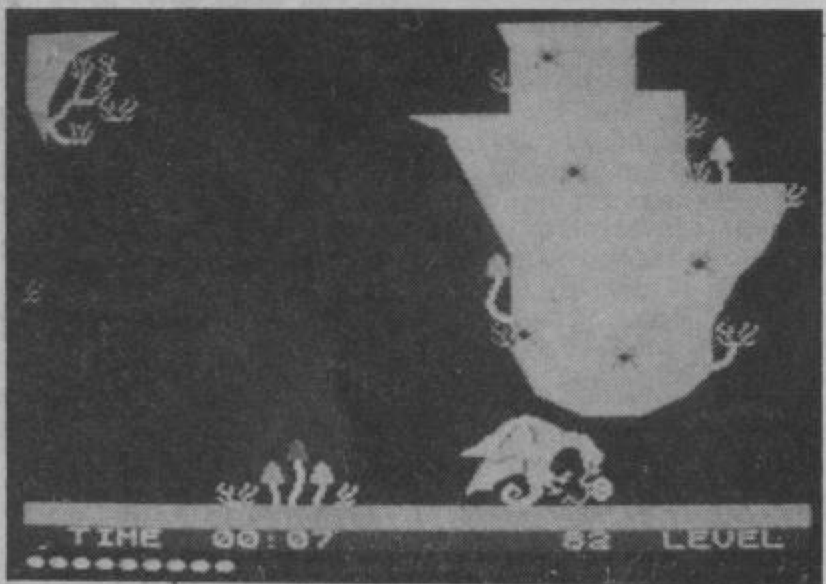
Quicksilva, as usual, provide you with a charming and utterly irrelevant story on the inlay, but all the controls are indicated once the program runs. You are a Bugaboo, a harmless flea of this parish, only you're a long way from home. The Walt Disney-like film intro shows Bugaboo

jumping here and there over a highly coloured alien terrain and for all I know, humming the *'Busy Bee'* song to himself, when all of a sudden he jumps down this narrow fissure in the ground, and down, and down, and down. It's all quite breathtaking. Eventually he reaches the bottom of the gorge and the game begins in earnest.

away. This could all be very easy, but the line of light, which flashes up the strength of indicator, does so very fast and it's extremely difficult to judge exactly the correct moment. The second you release the jump key it freezes the indicator to show you how wrong you were ...

Another difficulty is the design of the alien gorge,





The most enchanting, frustrating and colourful game of last year — BUGABOO (THE FLEA).

You must now get Bugaboo out of the gorge and back to the surface. One reviewer says in his notes that you score points according to the time it takes you to do this, but I found the game much too engaging to be bothered about a small thing like points!

The control keys are simplicity itself; 1 = hop left, 0 = hop right. At the bottom of the screen is a bar indicating strength of hop. When you depress the desired direction key, Bugaboo turns in that direction. Then you release the key when the indicator is at the desired strength and Bugaboo leaps which is a series of overhanging ledges, covered in mushrooms and foliage. Unless the flea lands safely on a higher ledge, he just keeps falling until he reaches the floor again. A further hazard is a yellow flying dragon which has a liking for fleas. At first this appalling monster leaves you alone, but after a few minutes he enters and gobbles you up. End of life. But you can start again immediately, whereupon he reappears, each time sooner than the last, so you've got less and less time to get to the top. Aborting the game offers the option of starting afresh, in which case the yellow meanie stays away for longer.

GENERAL

As the playing area is considerably greater than the screen you can scroll left/right or up/down by using the cursor keys in addition to hopping left to right. The scrolling is very smooth. The design and animation of Bugaboo is absolutely excellent, and so is that of the background. It is quite easy to forget that you are actually watching a picture generated by your Spectrum.

CRITICISM

'I think that together with *Ant Attack*, Quicksilva have come up with the two best games of 1983, and as far as arcade games for the Spectrum go, they could well be the best of 1984 too.'

'The keys are well positioned and easy to use. The use of colour is very good, and the sound is some of the best I've heard recently.'

'Bugaboo is a high quality arcade standard game, and it's highly addictive too. This game will definitely be a top seller!'

'The colourful graphics are an easy match for Manic Miner. It's a delight to play and mind-blowingly frustrating.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: easy to use
Joystick options: none provided, scrolling could be by AGF or Protek
Keyboard play: positive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: very good
Skill levels: none
Lives: one
General rating: Very highly recommended.

Use of computer:	90%
Graphics:	95%
Playability:	90%
Getting started:	95%
Addictive qualities:	90%
Value for money:	85%
Overall:	**92%**



Soft Solid 3D Ant Attack

Producer: **Quicksilva**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Sandy White**

Sandy White is a quiet Scot and a sculptor by trade. His understanding of three dimensional construction is evident in his game, *Ant Attack*. Unveiled at the **Quicksilva** press show, it raised admiring oohs and ahs from the gathering. According to the press release, Quicksilva was so impressed by the stunning quality of the graphics, that they flew Sandy down from Scotland and signed a contract within 24 hours. A patent has been applied for to protect his 3D soft solid routines.

Quite simply, *Ant Attack* contains the most breathtaking 3D graphics yet seen on the Spectrum; as one of our reviewers pointed out, very similar to *Zaxxon* graphics, and quite as good as you can see in an arcade.

THIS IS WHAT YOU DO

The idea of the game is to enter the Walled City of Antescher (*which has rested for a thousand years in the midst of the Great Desert inhabited only by the deadly ants who have made it their home*), and rescue your girlfriend. Actually, it's a non-sexist program which asks you whether you are a boy or a girl — the cute graphics distinguish between the two and make the main figure a hero or heroine according to taste.

You can walk or run round the massive city which exists in a space many times greater than the playing area. You can also jump up and down and climb the walls or stairs. All this activity is necessary to avoid the giant ants which will attack within moments of your entering. Two weapons are provided; 20 grenades which may be thrown varying distances by pressing keys **S-D-F** or **G** and which will either stun or kill an ant

ZX SPECTRUM SOFTWARE







ODYSSEY 1

A very exciting 100% M/C game to test your skill, concentration and ability to the full. Shoot the sound-sensitive Mutons, only to be followed by the Astro fleet and missiles, which then unleash the pterodactyl-like monsters.

Features include: Pause Function, Bonus Man, and much, much more.

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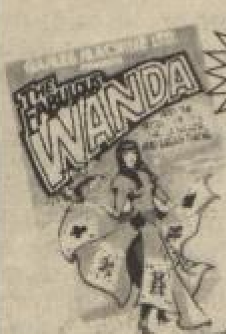
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depending on your accuracy, and the other weapon is your feet. Jumping up and down furiously on an ant will leave it paralysed and out of the running. Up to five ants attack at one time, but others will appear to replace the inactive ones. You can stand being bitten quite a bit, but too many bites will eventually result in loss of life!

GENERAL

The graphics are really stunning. The soft solid bit refers to the 3D effect achieved, not only with the buildings, which are all made up of blocks, hundreds upon hundreds of them, but also with the two humans and the ants. If your characters disappear behind a building you can press any of four keys (**O/P/ENTER/ SPACE**) which will give you a view of the same location from another compass point. The effect is very like a scene in a TV studio where you can look at the action from four differently placed cameras. The cutting from view to view occurs instantaneously and without a flicker.

The excellence of the 3D is also seen when your characters are surrounded by ants. The individual elements of the picture all merge in a most realistic manner, so much so that it's hard to tell who is who at times, and this adds to the difficulty of the game.

CRITICISM

'The animation of the figrues must be the best yet seen on the Spectrum.'

'The most serious drawback to enjoying the game is the handful of control keys required. Four keys for the different view angles, four keys to throw grenades, two keys to rotate left and right, another for forward movement and another for jumping. It makes twelve in all. They are quite difficult to manipulate.'

It's an extremely good game with plenty of action, but a little difficult to control at first.'

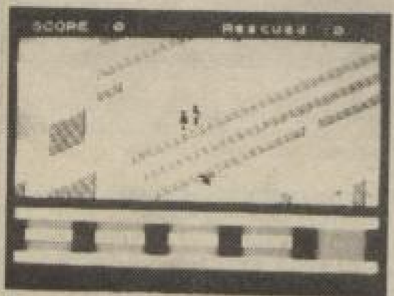
'I found it totally confusing at first with all those keys and no joystick that could possibly help, but it's so wonderful to look at that you're bound to persevere.'

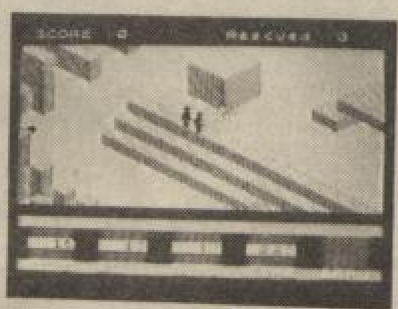
COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: highly complicated to master, though reasonably logical in placing. Perhaps a North/South/East/West system might have been easier
Joystick options: none possible
Keyboard play: very positive
Use of colour: varied opinions, but averaged out as good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: good
Skill levels: none
Lives: can be bitten 20 times
General rating: very highly recommended

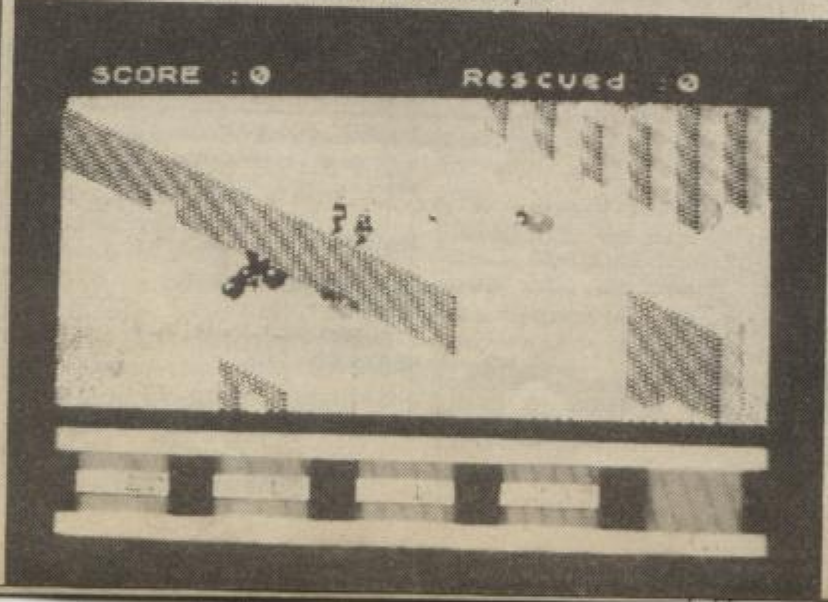
Use of computer:	**60%**
Graphics:	**100%**
Playability	**95%**
Getting started:	**80%**
Addictive qualities:	**80%**
Value for money:	**95%**
Overall:	**85%**

Playing television studios with 3D ANT ATTACK — three views of the same scene.





Hero & Heroine trapped in Ant Attack Shock Horror!



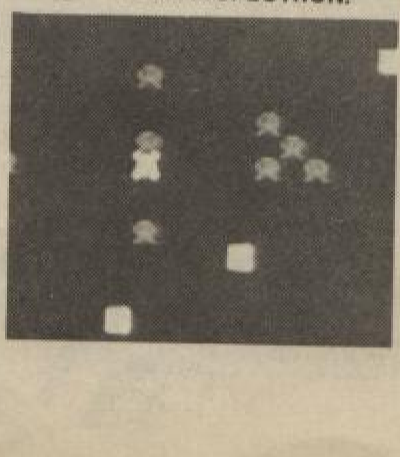
Spectron

Producer: **Virgin Games**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Mark Kirkby**

This is Virgin's best shoot 'em up game yet. You're the latest type of robot and you must survive in an arena filled with hostile enemies. There are Swarmers and Speeders (which home in on you) Launchers which also move about but randomly, second the Launchers fire missiles and which also home in on you. And then there are the Electrons, which are not small BBC type computers, but a rather nasty form of robot which leave virtually indestructible electronic fences behind them.

Your robot, Spectron, assembles in the centre of the screen after the nasties have been rapidly dotted in. It can move and fire in eight directions — move *and* fire being the operative words, since it only fires when moving.

You go 'Berserk' in SPECTRON.



GENERAL

The control keys are sensibly placed being, **Q/A** for up/down and **V/B** for left/right. There is no fire key, as firing is automatic in the direction of movement. No standard joystick option has been provided.

CRITICISM

'This is a no-win type game, where it's obviously impossible to beat the computer. Although there are only nine levels, the increasing speed and electronic fence factors really make this into a multi-skill level game.'

'There's good use of colour in the detailed and realistic graphics, and the sound is excellent. I got as far as being able to count 216 enemies on the screen at one time, so getting a bonus

score is no easy task. This is a well thought out game that will never be beaten. Fast reactions needed. Brilliant.'

'I noted the little instruction which tells you the program will "self-destruct" if the **BREAK** key is pressed. Are they trying to hide how much of the program is in **BASIC** or what? Anyway, I have only one gripe. The automatic fire is all very well and allows you to concentrate on moving, but it doesn't have a very fast fire rate considering how many damned enemies there are, and as it only fires when you're moving, you are often forced to kill yourself off (nice border exposions when you lose a life). Otherwise this is a fast and furious, well put together game.'

COMMENTS

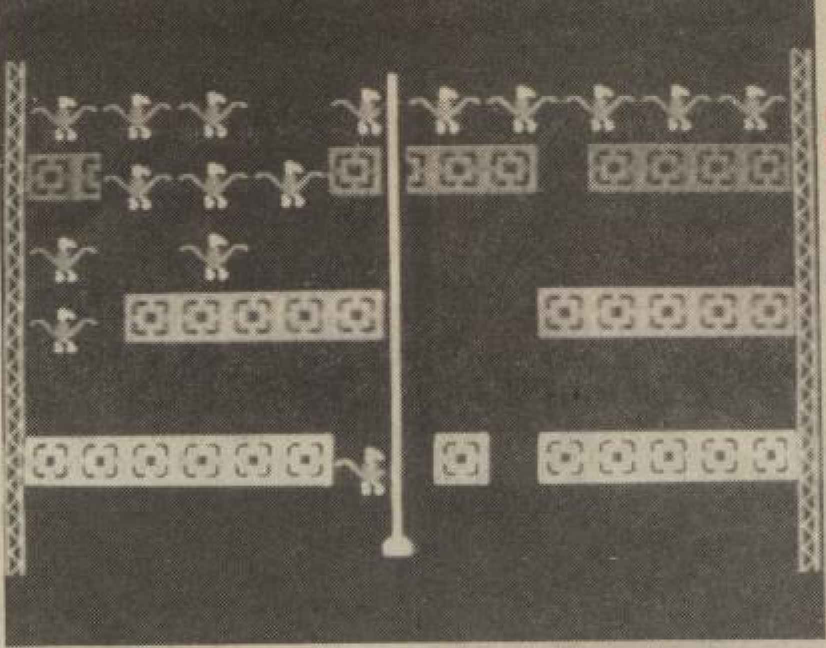
Keyboard positions: sensible
Joystick options: none provided
Keyboard play: very responsive, 8-directional
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: how many can you manage?
Lives: three
General rating: a very good zap game

Use of computer:	65%
Graphics:	70%
Playability	81%
Getting started:	85%
Addictive qualities:	80%
Value for money:	75%
Overall:	**76%**

FIREHAWKS

Producer: **Postern**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **BASIC + some code**
Author: **D Hoskins & C Davies**

Firehawks is literally a Phoenix game but practically speaking it's an Invader mutation. Your mission is to defend your planet from the deadly firehawks of the title. They come in search of energy and if one lands it turns into a Phoenix and the game ends.



A gathering of proto-phoenixes sit on the decorative brick walls.

The birds all line up at the top of the screen and you fire up at them with your laser. In the way are 'Plasma Screens' forming barriers. The birds cannot descend until the screens are removed by your shooting, although there is ususally a gap or two for them to use, and you can't get at them until you do shoot some holes in the screen.

CRITICISM

'The graphics are quite well drawn, but there is little amimation. It's possible to let the game stand still for ages by not shooting at any of the screens. If a bird lands the game ends with an impressive and very large graphic of the firehawk turning into a phoenix. It's impressive first time round, but as it takes quite a while to do this, it quickly becomes an irritation.'

'The laser blasts are nice, but the so called plasma screens resemble those decorative breeze blocks used to build walls — it looks a bit old fashioned. Despite the large selection of speeds and skill levels the game remians very average. It isn't exciting to play and at almost £7 it's overpriced.'

'The title promises excitement, but the game simply does not live up to it. When you come down to it, very little happens and speeding very little up just makes a very fast very little. It's also very expensive for what you get.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: sensible
Joystick option: none
Keyboard play: poor responses and difficult to line up ship
Use of colour: average
Graphics: average, but good laser
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 15 plus 15 speeds
Lives: 1
General rating: fair

Use of computer	50%
Graphics	48%
Playability	55%
Getting started	65%
Addictive qualities	48%
Value for money	40%
Overall	51%

Bowls

Producer: **Lotus Soft**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£4.50**
Language: **basic**
Author: **Derek Jones**

If you're fed up of zapping harmless aliens, escaping from claustrophic car parks or roaring round race tracks, why not retire to the peace and quiet of an English bowling green? This sport simulation program offers two players the services of the computer as mediator rather than player.

The rules for playing are exactly as in the real game except it's the computer that 'throws' the jack. For those who never watch Crown Green Bowling on telly, a jack is the black ball which is first thrown by one player before the two players catch it up by throwing their playing bowls to get as close to the jack as possible. The cursor keys **5** and **8** are used to move a base of screen pointer in the direction you want your bowl to go. The strength of throw is determined by the weight of bowl, a heavier ball going further than a light one. The computer then does the rest. You may cut to a diagramatic close up which shows in magnified form how close to the jack the bowl has come to rest. Each player has four throws, and the program allows for setting the number of games.

CRITICISM

'This was only a review copy I saw, so I've no idea what the actual packaging will be like, but the instructions presented on screen were brilliant. The use of colour couldn't have been better — green! And the simple graphics were okay. There are some good tunes and it's generally a good simulation of the game, but it gets boring after a bit.'

*'Nice screen after a short load with the instructions in the program. The keyboard positions are well laid out and the graphics are reasonable although limited because of the **BASIC.** The green appears to be 'crown' (ie raised at the centre) because the bowls tend to curve out and move back in on the jack. The game is not bad at all and at £4.50 it's one of the cheapest games on the market. But with excellent games available at about a pound more I would probably save my money. However it does make a nice change from saving the universe.'*

'I would have to say that while this is a very good game and a good simulation, it tends to suffer with the usual inactivity of armchair sports which divests the game of much of its excitement. However I would recommend it to anyone who happens to be interested in these types of game.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: sensible, 5/8 left/right and B for bowl
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: straightforward
Graphics: reasonable
Sound: average to poor
General rating: fair unless you enjoy quiet sport simulations.

Use of computer:	63%
Graphics:	58%
Playability	54%
Getting started:	72%
Addictive qualities:	45%
Value for money	50%
Overall:	57%

Reviews continue on 27

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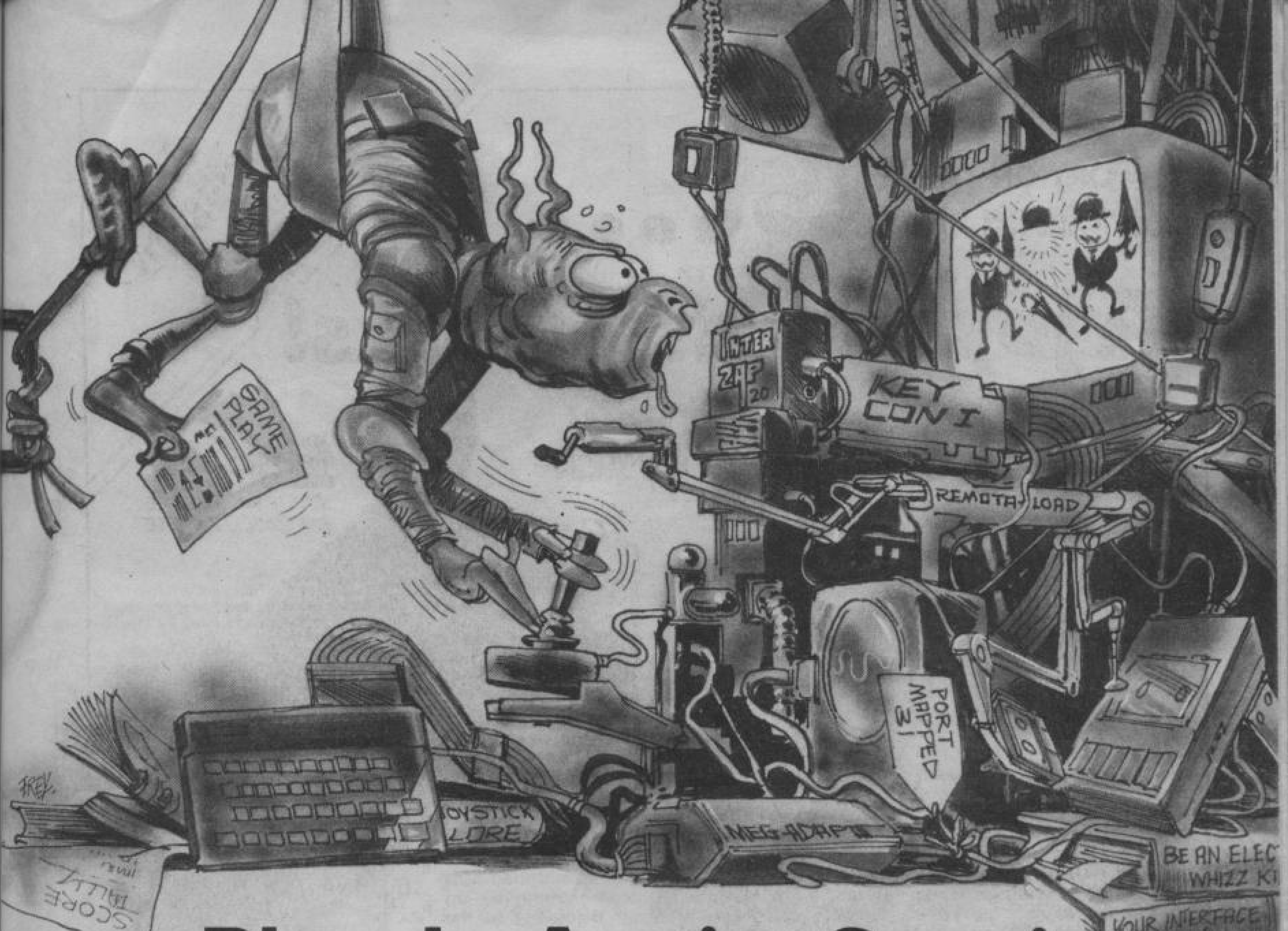
Tape

- Easy to use program enables the interface to work on ALL software
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Play It Again, Sam!

If you're fed up with smashing your keyboard to smithereens attempting to save mankind from ravening aliens then FRANCO FREY's rundown on the boons and banes of joysticks could be illuminating.

ENGAGE NEUTRON DRIVE ...

By the time you've been atomised for the umpteenth time by mean alien monsters after scoring a meagre 1425 points you may come to the conclusion that the odds are stacked against you. Why not give up on that soggy, slowmotion keyboard and improve your chances by using a better man-machine interface — one of those handy joysticks advertised in all good computer mags? Just plug it in and away you go — **or do you?**

As you stand in the shop contemplating the small print it will dawn on you that the laser and photon blasters may still be out of reach because the neutron and pulsar drive controls are not standardised in this quadrant of the universe, and in general the gravitational controls have eluded all intergalactic rulings and regulations.

As in all good adventure games you are left with four choices of direction, none of which may seem appealing at first and which will inevitably lead you into further brain-teasing selections. The problem, quite simply, is that the Spectrum was not designed to accept joysticks. To bully the joystick into delivering the goods you've got to use an interface between computer and joystick. So here I am talking more about interfaces than joysticks.

I see a room ... in the room is a joyless Spectrum ... what now?

OPTION ONE

This is the pluggit/zappit option and takes in the market leaders of joysticks for the Spectrum. If you insist on using a joystick and buy one of the following interfaces, then the range of games you can play will be reduced. You should be able to check on the game's inlay card to see if it is compatible with these interfaces, and it is worth noting here that wherever **AGF** is mentioned, this includes all cursor key compatible interfaces such as **Protek** and **Thurnall** as well. You will also find that any make of joystick, which has a 9-pin D plug connector, will work with any of the interfaces mentioned in this article.

The **Kempston** interface is unique in that it requires special input commands on input port 31 in the program to check activity on the joystick. Kempston have set through their early market appearance a standard and boast therefore the largest amount of compatible games. Kempston also provide three softlink programs which allow specific non-compatible games to be played with their joystick and these can be purchased separately.

The **AGF (Interface II)** and **Protek** interfaces are identical in function and operate parallel to the keyboards. In effect they replace the cursor keys for direction and O for firing. The **Thurnall** interface uses Q, A, Z, X as well as the cursor keys, so it's a bit more flexible.

The **Fuller** interface, known as **The Amazing Fuller Box,** sets again a different standard by requiring input commands on port 127, which is less frequently catered for, but for £29.95 it features extras such as a pro-

grammable sound generator chip, beep amplifier and volume box.

OPTION TWO

This section includes programmable joystick controllers, which allow any game to be played with your joystick. Several types exist but convenience of use varies considerably between them, so it's worth evaluating them carefully before making a choice.

The **Cambridge Interface** is software programmable. Selection of the keyboard commands to be used for the game is manipulated by a utility program which must be loaded before the actual game loading. Here is a guide to the lengthy procedure required: first make sure that you know the control keys of the game. Sometimes this involves loading the game first to discover this essential info because not all software producers go to the trouble of listing the keys on the cassette inlay. If you're unfortuante enough to have to go through this first, you must clear the computer again before loading the utility. This program allows you to create a library for each game you own. If it's a new game, the program asks you which control keys are used. When this has been entered and checked, you can make a copy on cassette, thus saving yourself the tedious task of having to enter all the data every time you want to play the same game. With this updated library program you only enter the game's title and the program automatically sets up the joystick to suit the control keys. The Cambridge interface allows for two firing buttons that operate separately, useful for bombs as well as lasers. Now, if you have grasped this intricate procedure, you may very well get along with the Cambridge interface ...

A much better proposition might be the **Stonechip** programmable interface which, like the Cambridge, is software programmable. A 3-way switch is set on the face of the unit. When this is set to *program* pressing the appropriate key on the keyboard and at the same time activating the joystick in the direction required will program the interface. This procedure is then repeated for the other three directions and the firing action. All you have to do then is switch to *play* and the joystick will become fully compatible with that particular control key configuration. The advantage of this system over the Cambridge is that you can program the interface before *or* after loading the game, so it doesn't matter if the control keys are not listed on the cassette inlay. On the other hand, Stonechip only provide one firing action, but at £24.95 the unit is a good investment.

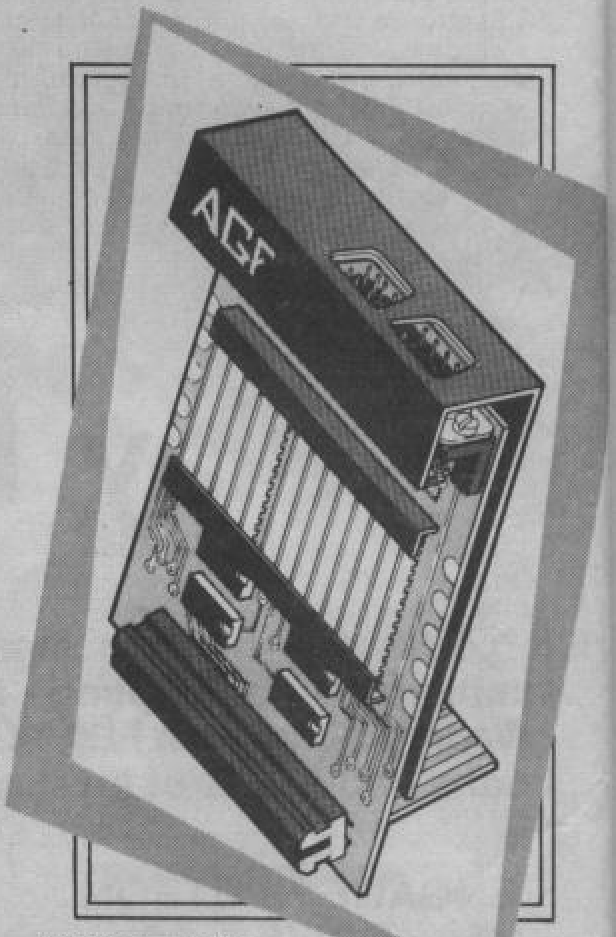
The **Downsway** programmable interface operates along similar lines and allows for the same easy programming with a small price advantage.

For the third choice it's back to **AGF** and the **AGF programmable Interface.** This operates parallel to the keyboard, allowing you to select the keys in function mechanically. To do this you connect flying leads with small crocodile clips to two separate rows of matrix busbars. On the left hand side is a matrix of five flying leads and five busbars for the data selection, corresponding to the keyboard columns. On the right hand side are five flying leads and eight busbars for the selection of the memory address lines, corresponding to the half rows of the keyboard. Basically this allows selection of any keys whenever you want and their operation via the joystick, but its drawback is that you require a look-up table, supplied with the interface, for programming it — so make sure it doesn't get lost or the aliens will have a field day.



The Protek Interface and Spectravision QuickShot joystick - two firing buttons, but only one firing action.

A more user-friendly programmable interface has been designed by **Frel Ltd.** This unit features a matrix board representing the Spectrum keyboard. Six flying leads with robust two-pole line sockets annotated for each control function (up, down, left, right, fire 1 and fire 2) can be plugged into any of the 40 keyboard positions. Of all the methods I have looked at, this one proves to be the simplest way of programming any universal joystick so far. The unit is said to be available at a price of below £15, which also makes it the cheapest of any method.



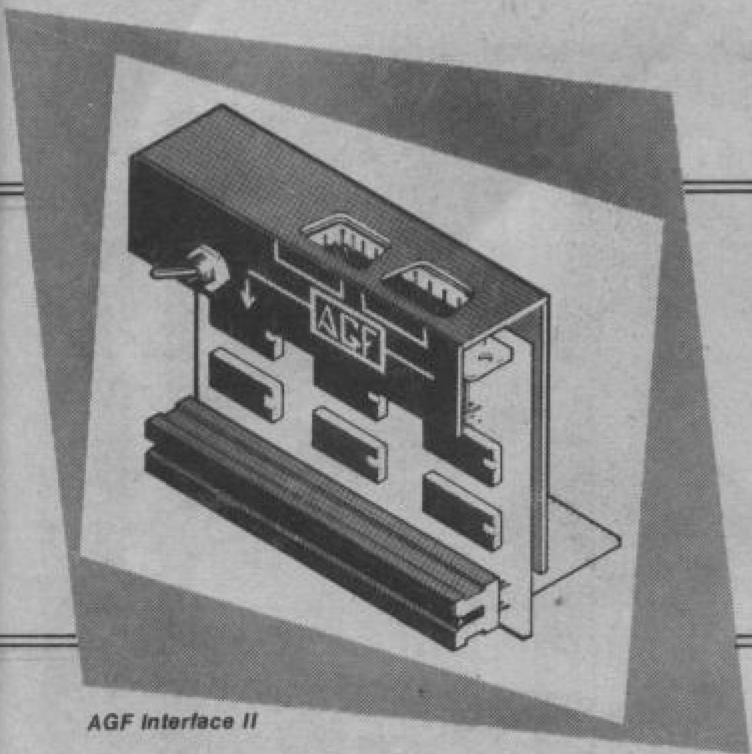
AGF Programmable Interface - attach your crocodiles and away you go.

OPTION THREE

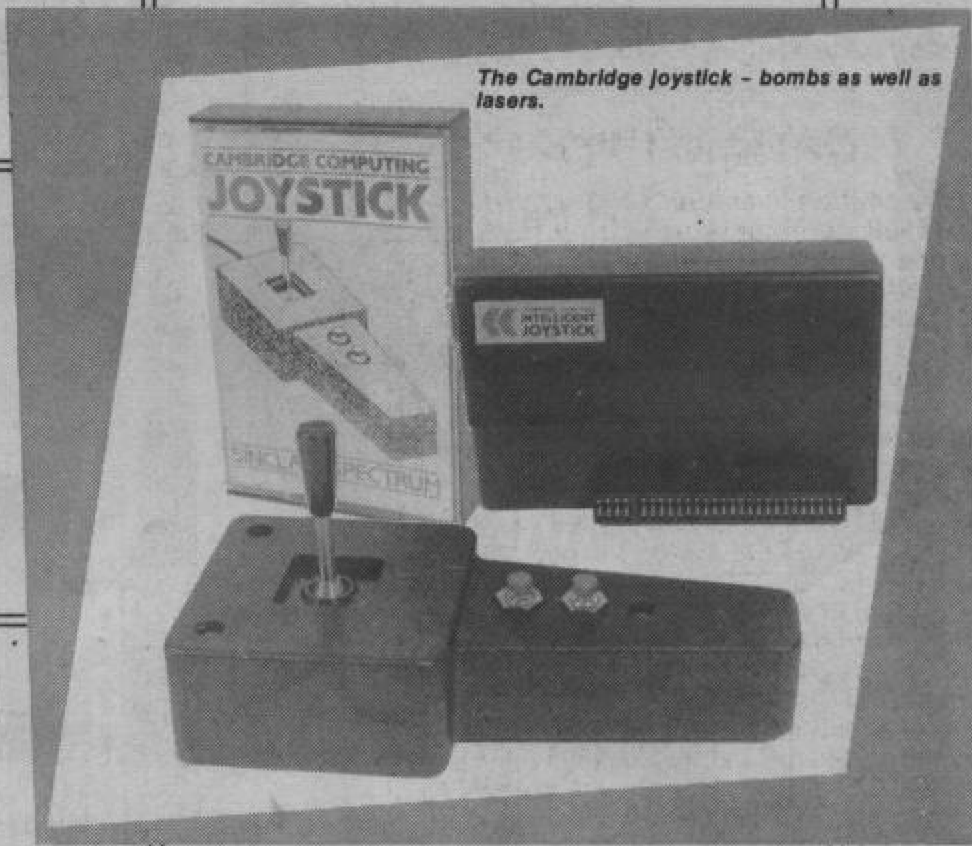
Among the latest solutions to the joystick controller problem is also the most official — Sinclair Research's **ZX Interface 2.** It accepts games in ROM cartridge form and has two joystick ports and so converts the low-priced



Amazing Box from Fuller - seen here attached to the keyboard.



AGF Interface II



The Cambridge joystick – bombs as well as lasers.

Spectrum home computer into an Atari lookalike games machine. There's a touch of the moving backwards in all this since I must presume a lot of the Spectrum's success has depended not only on its low price but also on the low cost software available. In addition to some of Sinclair's own range you can already buy **Ultimate's** games *Jetpac, Pssst, Cookie* and *Tranz Am* in the new ROM cartridge form — but at a cost of £14.95 instead of £5.50. Whether this system will really catch on, as Sinclair confidently expect, remains to be seen. It might have had a greater value if it accepted Atari cartridges — but of course that would have meant an entirely different Spectrum.

The keys used for the function of the joystick are non standard: 6, 7, 8, 9 and 0 for fire, with 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 for fire for the second joystick, thus allowing two joysticks to be operated simultaneously and independently. It means the interface won't be much use for existing software, but a Sinclair official told me that it is really very simple for the software houses to modify their 400 plus games to accommodate the new system. I was told, 'Kempston have set a standard, I suppose, and now we are setting one.'

It seems a pity they couldn't have gone along with an existing system and saved everyone a lot of trouble. Still, it would appear that the 'official' ZX Interface 2 is being backed by the large and established companies such as **Quicksilva** and **Ultimate** and even by the new 'biggies' entering the Spectrum market such as **Thorn EMI,** who are launching ZX Interface 2 compatible software. **DK Tronics** are obviously quick on the draw and have already launched a multi-compatible joystick interface, which will operate either with the 'official' 6, 7, 8, 9 and 0 keys, or with the Kempston input 31 commands. It thus covers an extremely wide range of software.



Sinclair's new ZX Interface 2 - ROM as well as ZAP.

INTERFACE TABLE OVER THE PAGE

OPTION FOUR

After wading through this you may well consider option four — stick to the disintegrating keyboard and increase your odds against fellow gamers, collecting less points as you go, but knowing that somewhere out there in deepest space some alien is fighting the same battle with his inadequate keyboard ...

AGF
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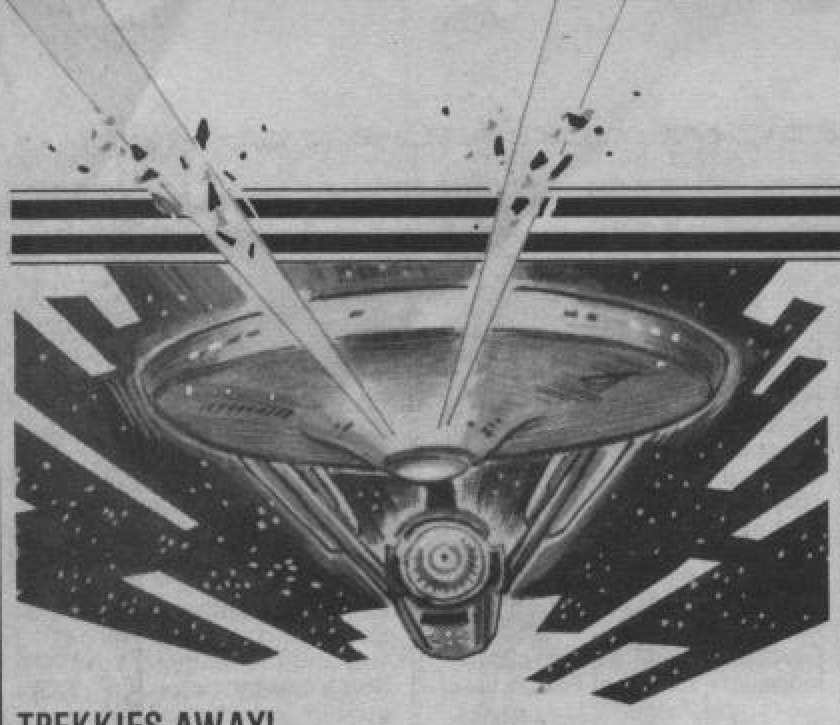
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joysticks & interfaces

PRODUCER	PRODUCT	INTERFACING	FIRE	INTERFACE DETAILS	JOYSTICK DETAILS (port)	RRP
AGF	INTERFACE II	**Port 1:** 5/6/7/8 **Port 2:** T/Y/U/I Operates parallel with keyboard	**Port 1:** 0 **Port 2:** P 1 fire function per port	2 independent joystick ports 9 pin D Type Atari standard	Joystick not included Atari 9 pin D Type	**15.95** *1.00 p&p*
AGF	PROGRAMMABLE INTERFACE	**Port 1 = Port 2,** fully hardware programmable, operates parallel with keyboard	**Port 1 Port 2** Programmable, 1 fire function	2 equal (parallel) ports matrix programmable with crocodile clips using code table	Joystick not included Atari 9 pin D Type	**32.95** *1.00 p+p*
AGF	COMPATABILITY CASSETTE ONE	**Leader Tape** **Covers: Arcadia/Schizoids/Hungry Horace/Horace Goes Skiing/Spectres/Penetrator**				4.95
	COMPATABILITY CASSETTE TWO	**Leader Tape** Covers: Centipede/Plantoids/Jetpac/Pssst/3D Combat Zone/Invaders				4.95
CAMBRIDGE	PROGRAMMABLE JOYSTICK & INTERFACE	**Software programmable** with loader tape	2 fire functions	Loader tape creates library for easier, faster programming of favourite tapes	**Flightlink** type joystick with 2 independent firing buttons Atari 9 pin D Type connector	29.90
DATEL ELECTRONICS LTD	TRIGA COMMAND	**Port mapped** Input port 31	1 trigger fire button (1 fire function)	**KEMPSTON COMPATIBLE** Joystick port 9 pin D Type Atari comp	Rubber suction cups for 1-hand operation	**19.95** *1.50 p+p*
DATEL ELECTRONICS LTD	INTERFACE UNIT	**Port mapped** Input port 31 Requires input (port 31) commands in program	1 fire function	**KEMPSTON COMPATIBLE** Joystick port 9 pin D Type Atari comp	Joystick not included Atari 9 pin D Type	**11.99** *1.50 p+p*
DK TRONICS	JOYSTICK & INTERFACE	**Port 1:** 6/7/8/9 Operates parallel with keyboard **Port 2:** port mapped Input Port 31 Requires input (port 31) commands in program	**Port 1:** 0 **Port 2:** in 31 16 1 trigger fire button, 1 LH fire button	**SINCLAIR INTERFACE 2 & KEMPSTON COMPATIBLE** Joystick port 9 pin D Type Atari comp	**Spectravision Quickshot** joystick rubber suction cups for 1-hand operation	**22.95** *incl*
DOWNSWAY	PROGRAMMABLE INTERFACE	**Memory programmable:** with Program/Play switch 8 direction & fire	1 fire function (program)	Programmed with switch, activating joystick & keyboard at same time	Joystick not included Atari 9 pin D Type	**22.95** *incl.*
FREL	COMCON PROGRAMMABLE INTERFACE	**Matrix programmable** with leads and Molex connectors, operates parallel with keyboard	2 fire functions, fully programmable	Matrix is copy of keyboard. 6 leads represent 6 functions and can be plugged into corresponding key positions	Atari 9 pin D Type. Fire 2 only available with **Flightlink** joystick	*not yet avail approx £15*
FULLER	FULLER BOX	**Port mapped** Input Port 127	1 fire function	Beep Amplifier, cassette interface can be upgraded to Master Unit (voice synth)	Joystick not included Atari 9 pin D Type	**29.95** *80p p+p*
KEMPSTON	COMPETITION PRO JOYSTICK WITH INTERFACE	**Port mapped** Input port 31	1 fire function, 2 fire buttons	Industry standard: many games cater for this unit	Fire buttons for left & right hand	**24.99**
KEMPSTON	KEMPSTON I	**Conversion Tape:** Covers: Hungry Horace/Horace Goes Skiing/Flight Simulation/Arcadia/Penetrator/Spectres/Space Zombies				4.95
	KEMPSTON II	**Conversion Tape:** Covers: Orbiter/Escape/3D Tanx/Centipede (DK)/Spectral Invaders/Cruising On Broadway/Frenzy (QS)				4.95
	KEMPSTON III	**Conversion Tape:** Covers: Ah Diddums/Jumping Jack/Molar Maul/Androids/Horace & The Spiders/Space Raiders/Winged Avenger/Muncher				4.95
PROTEK	JOYSTICK INTERFACE	5/6/7/8 Operates parallel with keyboard	0, 1 fire function	**AGF II COMPATIBLE,** many games cater for cursor key operation	Joystick not included Atari 9 pin D Type	14.95
PROTEK	QUICKSHOT SPECTRAVISION JOYSTICK		1 fire function, 1 trigger fire & LH fire button		Rubber suction cups for 1-hand operation	9.95
SINCLAIR	ZX INTERFACE 2	**Port 1:** 6/7/8/9 **Port 2:** 5/4/3/2 Operates parallel with keyboard	**Port 1:** 0 **Port 2:** 1 1 fire function per port	ROM Cartridge interface for games cartridges. Very little software compatible with port 1 & 2 but will obviously improve	Joystick not included Atari 9 pin D Type	19.95
STONECHIP	PROGRAMMABLE INTERFACE	**Memory programmable** with Program/Normal/Play switch	1 fire function (programmable)	Programmed with switch, activating joystick and keyboard at same time	Joystick not included Atari 9 pin D Type	24.95
SUMLOCK	PRO ACE JOYSTICK	Can be used with most interfaces	1 fire function, 1 trigger fire & base fire button	**ATARI COMPATIBLE** 9 pin D Type connector	Triger fire button, large left or right hand firing button	12.95
THURNALL	THURNALL INTERFACE WITH JOYSTICK	**Port 1:** 5/6/7/8 **Port 2:** Q (or ENTER) A/Z/X	**Port 1:** 0/SPACE or ENTER **Port 2:** CAPS SHIFT or SPACE 1 fire function per port	DIL switch on interface for selecting fire functions up movement on port 2, continuous CAPS SHIFT for all functions	Atari type joystick included, 9 pin D Type connector. Extra joystick available	**24.95** *80p p+p* **7.95**



News-Update

TREKKIES AWAY!

R & R Software, the people who brought us one of the earliest Spectrum *Star Trek* versions and one of the best creepies in *Spectipede*, are busily going where few ZX men have gone before — namely South Africa and New Zealand! In these far off places, the Spectrum is still in its infancy, but selling well **Bob Brenchley** of R&R tells me. He's hoping the success of the Spectrum will keep Japanese and American imports at bay, but to help he is ensuring British software for the computer is readily available to back up hardware sales.

One angle is supporting software sales in **CRASH** magazine which Bob has chosen to export to South Africa. With the magazine, it is hoped, both dealers and computer owners will be able to see what's happening here in Britain and what the games are all about.

Another Trekkster on the move is **Derek Brewster** of **Neptune Computing**. His *Star Trek* has proved very popular although its never been strongly advertised. Now an improved new version is available from **Mikrogen,** who are marketing it for Derek. In fact this version has gone through six stages — the one out previously was number four.

'It's vastly improved upon the older one,' Derek told me, 'in fact the program is quite unrecognisable. There are more graphics and it works in real time.'

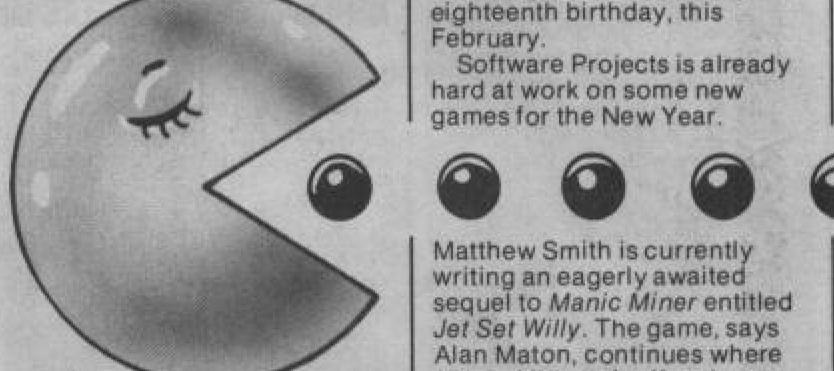
Graphically, the screen has been tidied up with all the relevant status reports shown in clearly defined, coloured boxes beside the view screen. The Short Range Scan is also more detailed with clear shapes for the Enterprise, Klingon ships and bases. But the biggest change is noticeable during the battles. Instead of having to sit helplessly while the enemy fire away at your position, you can now type in commands via interrupt and the computer processes them as soon as it can. This obviously speeds up the thinking process required and makes it even more a game two or three people can enjoy at the same time. At the time of writing, I am unsure when this version will be available, but look out for a full review in the next issue.

Meanwhile Derek has also been doing programs for **Micromega** — I'm told *Haunted Hedges* is selling very well — and I've just seen the new one, *Starclash* which will be out by now. Again we'll be reviewing it more fully in the next issue, for now I'll just say it's a shoot 'em up which looks deceptively easy! And then there's *Invasion 2000* — this one so new I haven't been able to see anything yet. Derek tells me it's a working title and Micromega may well alter it to something else before it appears.

ATARIAN BATTLE FLEET TAKES OFF

In **Imagine's** *Arcadia*, the Atarian Battle Fleet look unstoppable. Turning their attention to the Spectrum and other computers, games giant **Atari International** are releasing some of their famous games like *Pac Man, Miss Pac Man, Defender, Galaxians* and *Centipede* over the next few months. The first out is *Pac Man* for the Spectrum. The idea is to make the games as close to the arcade originals as possible. *Pac Man* will be 16K and uses just over 9K of program. There isn't an ounce of **BASIC** in it, not even a loader program — they get it to run by manipulating the machine stack. To squeeze it all in they are using some odd areas of memory address, the hi-score, for instance, is in **MEMBOX**. The result is a version with all the original tunes and animation between screens. *Miss Pac Man*, following soon after is even more detailed and requires 48K. Unlike *Pac Man* which uses moving characters, *Miss Pac Man* is done with interrupt-based sprites and moving pixel graphics to give it a look very like you would see on a much bigger arcade machine. There are all the original animation stories between screens too.

The question remains as to how popular these games will be. Undoubtedly they will be of extremely high quality, but will their 'official version' status make them big sellers? After all, there are already numerous versions for the Spectrum on the market, and at much lower prices than the £14.99 Atari are charging. Paying a little extra for 'artistic input', as **Eric Salaman** UK Marketing Manager for Atari calls it, might be acceptable, but almost three times as much ...?



JOE THE LION

Joe the Lion is the unlikely but likeable name of a new software company based in Hyde, Cheshire. In fact the new outfit has older connections, as it is a member of the **PASE Group**, whose **Pasesoft** has been marketing *Paseman* since the early summer. **Mr Holt** from Joe the Lion told me that they hope to become market leaders in 1984 and are not sparing any expense in the production of their games and added, formidably, that they are nothing to do with Pasesoft, but that the two companies will be operating independently of each other, side by side.

The first three games are *Challenger* for the BBC, *Loki* for the 48K Oric and *Bimbo* for the 16K/48K Spectrum. I haven't seen *Bimbo* yet and we'll be reviewing it in the next issue no doubt, but the description says that: armed only with a carrot-detecting radar and a handful of apples to distract his pursuants, Bimbo Rabbit must seek out and eat all the carrots in a large maze of which only a small section is visible. The price is **£5.45.**

MANIC MILLIONAIRE

Software Projects Ltd of Liverpool (whose *Push Off* we review in this issue) is a new software house, but the members of the company are by no means new to games software. **Alan** and **Soo Maton** left leading software house Bug-Byte to form Software Projects together with **Matthew Smith.** Matthew is undoubtedly best known for writing one of 1983's best games, *Manic Miner*. Although still too young to legally become a shareholder in the company, Matthew will be receiving his shares on his eighteenth birthday, this February.

Software Projects is already hard at work on some new games for the New Year.

Matthew Smith is currently writing an eagerly awaited sequel to *Manic Miner* entitled *Jet Set Willy*. The game, says Alan Maton, continues where *Manic Miner* left off, only now Willy is a millionaire from his sub-Surbiton mining exploits. The action takes place at parties being thrown in Willy's new mansion (thrown being the operative word no doubt!)

Another full time member of staff is sixteen-year old **Chris Cannon**, author of Bug-Byte's adventure *The Castle*. Chris will be looking after the technical side of things.

ODYSSEY 1 WINS THROUGH

Matthew Uffindel, one of our reviewers, will be pleased to know how good his judgement is. Having spent hours playing **Perfection Software's** *Odyssey 1*, he spent the next few hours raving about it. Now he's been backed up by the judges of the **Cardiff Computech 83 Cometition.** Perfection's young programmer, **Timothy Williams**, won first prize in the games section of the competition. Organised by the Polytechnic of Wales and the Western Mail newspaper, the competition was open to schools and colleges throughout Wales.

Timothy's boss (and father) **Brian Williams**, told me they were delighted by the judges decision, and that he was sure all along that the 100% machine code **Odyssey 1** would win. The first prize was presented by the Secretary of State for Wales, Nicholas Edwards — it was a BBC Model B Micro. I hope that does not mean we won't be seeing any more games for the Spectrum from Perfection!

INTELLIGENT ADVENTURES

Dr Tim Langdell of **Softek** tells me that they are in the midst of putting in a development system for programming games this year. It's cost a lot of money, especially as it is being custom built for them, but Dr Langdell believes that games players will no longer put up with the kind of programs which have flooded the market throughout last year. He told me that they get many youngsters approaching them with very good ideas for games but with only a rudimentary knowledge of writing well in machine code.

Very soon we should be seeing Softek's first ever adventure games. Dr Langdell's speciality is artificial intelligence, and he is planning that Softek's first excursion into adventures will make the *Hobbit* look out of date — at last. Keep your eyes peeled for more news adventure freaks!

PIMAN & GROUCHO IN TV FIRST

For the first time in this country, 'personalities' from a computer game have appeared on television. It was all a blatant publicity stunt really for **Mel Croucher** and **Christian Penfold** of Automata, who, not satisfied with driving poor old Pimaniacs out of their minds, have now launched their TV careers in an attempt to upset decent viewers who take a serious interest in the proper uses of computers. Playing their two famous characters Piman and Groucho, Croucher and Pendfold were invited to take part in Central Television's program *Magic Micro Mission*, which was screened in December. I'm told that plans for the Piman to appear a guest role in *Coronation Street* have had to be shelved as Granada TV were not prepared to pay the fee asked. Groucho, of course, will work for anything.

BATTLE WINNER

On to a more serious note: **C.C.S.** have announced the winner of the 1983 Cambridge Award, a programming competition for the Spectrum and ZX81, which they run in conjunction with *Sinclair User*.

The winner was **Mark Lucas** with *BATTLE 1917*, described as a highly original strategic war game written for the Spectrum 48K for 2 players. The game is based on the campaign of the First World War and requires players to exercise all the skills and tenacity of the Generals during that dreadful conflict. We shall be reviewing the game in the next issue.

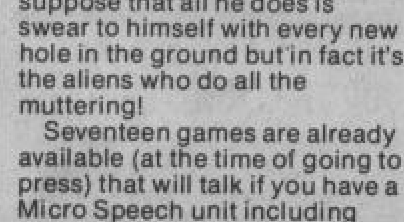


Mark was presented with his prize of £1,000 and the Cambridge Award Trophy on Saturday 3rd. December at the 9th. ZX Microfair at Alexandra Palace.

SWEARING JETMAN

Have you heard *Lunar Jetman* talk yet? If you have then you must already own a **Micro Speech** unit from **Currah Computers**. Knowing how hard *Jetman* is to play, one might suppose that all he does is swear to himself with every new hole in the ground but in fact it's the aliens who do all the muttering!

Seventeen games are already available (at the time of going to press) that will talk if you have a Micro Speech unit including *Atic Atac, Lunar Jetman, The Birds and the Bees* from **Bug-Byte,** *Blastermind* from **Martech,** *Mined-Out* from **Quicksilva** and parts 1-4 of the **Digital Fantasia** *Mysterious Adventures*. I am told that 32 software houses to date are now planning immediate releases of games which talk, so the Micro Speech unit looks like being good value at £29.95. On top of the games you can use Micro Speech to add sound to your own programs and all the volume is pumped out through your television set for added impact. Some existing sound on program systems tend to slow down the game because the computer has to process more information, but Micro Speech is interrupt operated which means it hardly interferes with the playing speed at all.



Look out for a detailed review of Micro Speech in a future issue soon, when we'll be putting it through its verbal paces.

SUPER DRAW WINNERS

Seven thousand eager visitors to the 9th. ZX Micro Fair at Alexandra Palace last August received sticky black fingers from the CRASH Micro Games Action brochure! It was hot inside the pavilion and some of the printers ink came off the paper. For those who took part in the **CRASH SUPER DRAW**, and thousands did, you may be interested to know who the winners were. The draw took place, as promised, on September 20th. and was made by the Chairman of Ludlow Computer Club, **Commander Locke**.

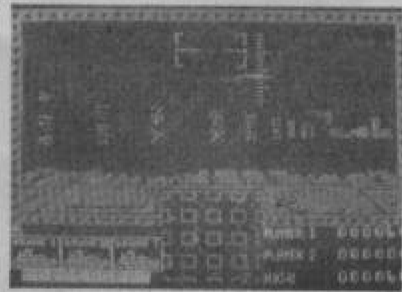
The lucky winner, who received £100 worth of games software, was **Daniel Rigal** of London E2. The four runners up were **D Bedford** of Langley, Slough; **G Devonport** of Barkway, Herts; **Paul Holloway** of Hayes, Middx; and **P J Morse** of Welwyn Garden City, Herts. The runners up each received £10 worth of games software.



Commander Locke, Chairman of the Ludlow Computer Club.

3D BADDIES & NIGHTFLYING

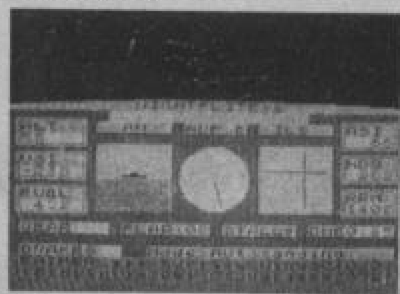
Imagine you're a tank commander battling to defend a city from attack by Seiddab aliens and you have some idea of what it's like to play **3D Seiddab Attack,** the latest arcade game from **Hewson Consultants** for the 16/48K Spectrum. The Seiddab (Baddies backwards!) were the aliens in *3D Space Wars,* and now you must fight them again, controlling your tank in the city



streets while alien airborne craft swoop and attack. If you can seek out the Seiddab 'Task Force Leader' before your tank armous is destroyed by enemy fire, the game moves to the next level in a countryside setting.

Increasing levels of difficulty make *3D Seiddab Attack* challenging and the effective 3D graphics make many other games seem dull by comparison. Other features are 2-player scoring, hi-score, radar scanner and a warning display when tank missiles number less than 10.

On show at the December ZX Microfair was Hewson's *Nightflite II*, an enhanced version of the successful flight simulator *Nightflite. Nightflite II* is written entirely in machine code, so despite all the added features it runs on either a 16 or 48K Spectrum. Among the exciting new features are a shifting perspective which shows the correct view of runway lights and surrounding hamlets from whichever direction the airfield is apprcached. There is also a realistic engine sound which varies with engine speed making the simulation a close approximation to real flight experience.



All this is possible because the author of *Nightflite II* **Mike Male**, is a keen aircraft pilot and air traffic controller by profession. Consequently the game is based on real experience.

The program includes a flight debrief after every flight and which may be printed out complete with Mike Male's signature, as a permanent record of the flight. Other features include: seven modes of operation, including two anti-pilot modes and a training mode; six levels of difficulty; variable flap controls; and realistic cockpit instruments.

3D Seiddab Attack is priced **£5.95** and *Nightflite II* is **£7.95,** both games are available from all good software retailers or direct from Hewson Consultants.

THE FOREST



Is The Forest pointing the way towards better Adventures?

Producer: **Phipps Associates**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **main in BASIC, movement and data in m/c**
Author: **Graham T Relf**

Dense fir branches suddenly gave way to an easy ground of mature trees, through which I could easily maintain a brisk pace. I checked my progress, scanning the woods for any telltale signs. Yes, there it was at barely 10 metres distance, a few white rocks hidden under vegetation. I stood in front of the ruins I had set my bearings on for the last 100 metres. Producing the map, compass and protractor I set course for northwest, maintaining the same altitude. This would lead me to the clearing, well clear of the open moor, then down the valley to the edge of the lake, after which it would be child's play following the waterfront to the large boulder. Then across the woods due east to the edge of the town and the finishing point.

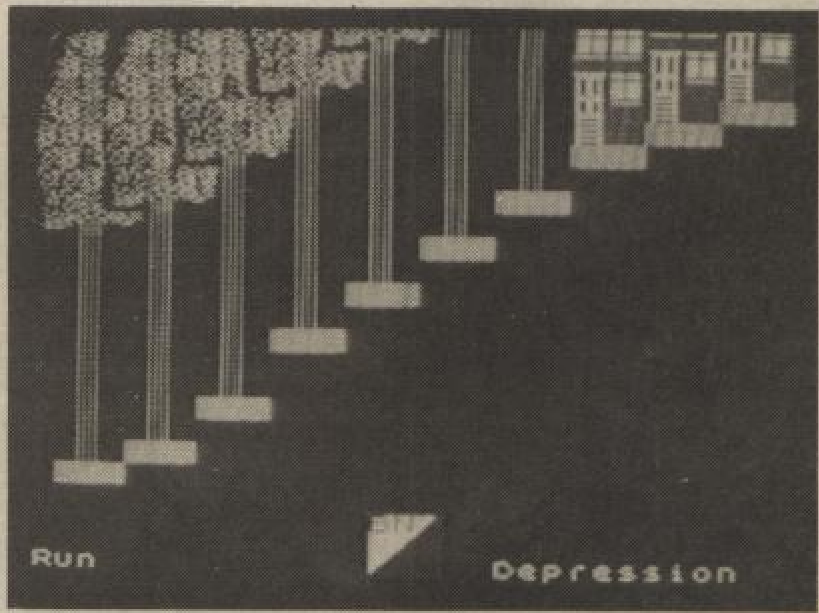
If this reads like a typical orienteering course then it is because **Graham Relf** has made an astonishingly realistic simulation of the sport on the Spectrum. There's no need to be in top physical shape — leave that to Olivia Newton John, but it would be wise to know something about the art of map reading and navigating. It is here that you can learn something and yet fully enjoy the game.

There is an enormous area of geography enclosed in the game, approximately 37 square kilometres, of which only a small portion has been charted so far. Included on this map is a 12 point course ready for you to tackle in the shortest possible time. All you have to do is visit each control point in the right sequence. The proof of your visit will be printed on your control card, which you carry with you. Each check point has a special code, so cheating's out.

Each step taken is approximately one metre, as in real life, with a random variation of plus or minus 10 degrees. This means taking ten steps for every millimetre of the supplied 200 x 210mm map! As your bearing drifts while moving, don't go running for miles without checking it.

The display shows you the terrain six metres in front of you and it varies from thick fir trees, to running wood (mature trees), moors (hard going), open grass, town area or even lake. Special point features such as buildings, boulders, rock outcrops, mine shafts, knolls, depressions etc. will be displayed as a message (with code if it is a checkpoint).

An eye level marker in front tells you whether the ground is rising or falling, so you can easily follow contours on the map this way. As real time is used you can check on elapsed time. It can be taken at a very brisk pace as the graphics are updated in a short instant, and speed, as in real life, is dependent on the terrain. If you are ascending in thick wood, you will be puffing and panting — not too strenuous from your armchair!



THE FOREST, showing some of the symbols used throughout the program.

The orienteering feature of the game is excellent in itself, but further to that you may use the program to chart the vast areas which surround the printed map on the cover. Calling up the menu at any time you can get exact co-ordinates of your position (but using it in orienteering will affect your final results). Provision is made for drawing out contour and terrain maps of any area you specify; and a routine is provided to detect any point features in a given sector.

With these many features you will be able to construct maps similar to the cover map, but be warned — it's a major task! If all this is not satisying enough, there is a facility for displaying cross sections of the landscape and, better still, constructing a 3D view with these cross sections of any given area!

One of the facilities offered is the drawing of 3D sections of the landscape.



The Forest certainly makes a change from the usual arcade or even adventure games. It also points the way to better adventure games. Based on the graphical display of the terrain and the actual technique of movement (in paces in **any** direction) the games player could be living in a fictitious and weird fantasy world of a 10 square kilometres or so. A vast area to explore.

Given the added thrill of self-propelled adventure characters, living their own lives in this vast area, similar to the Hobbit characters, and visually better point features such as caves, castles, dungeons, forest huts and so on, you could be moving in a total fantasy world. Now if someone were to combine these features with a brilliant plot and with cartoon-like moving characters such as in *Valhalla*, you could be in Adventure Land...

FRANCO FREY

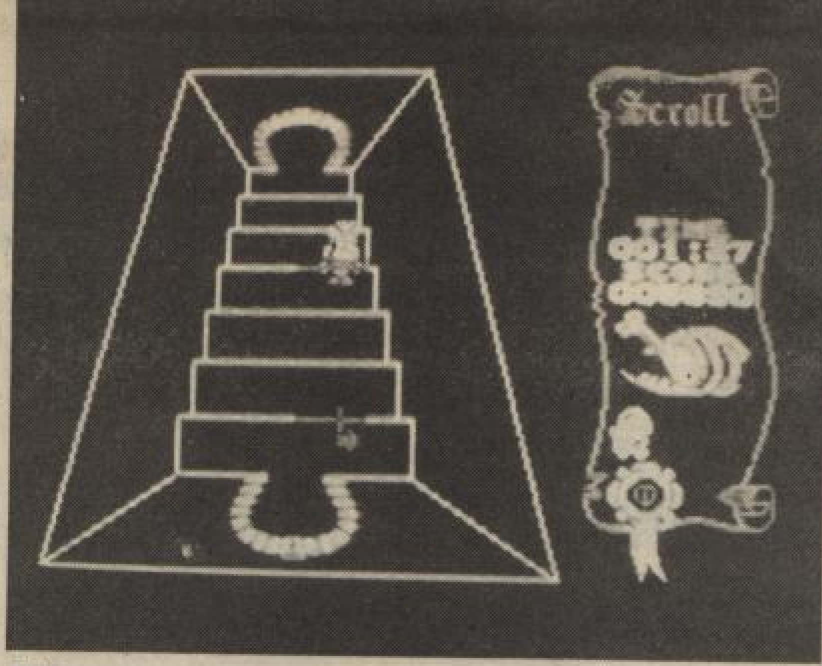
ATIC ATAC

Producer: **Ultimate**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**

Atic Atac, the eagerly awaited graphic adventure from **Ultimate** has just arrived on the review desk as the last bits and pieces go to bed, so we are unable to give it a full review in this issue, we'll do that next month.

However here is a brief run down. In *Atic Atac* you may select to be a **Knight**, a **Wizard** or a **Serf**. Each fights in his own way — the Knight hurls axes at his numerous enemies, the Wizard throws spells and the Serf swords. Movement is in eight directions, but the Serf is harder to handle because he doesn't stop moving when you release a key.

The object is to explore the castle which contains countless rooms on five floors. Each room is seen in perspective from above. The doors open and shut by themselves, there are objects to pick up or drop, endless numbers of highly detailed monsters and the graphics are generally superb. You can withstand a certain number of monster contacts before losing a life (the cross marking your death spot remains until the end of the game). The way the thrown weapons ricochet off the walls is lovely. There's obviously a lot more to this game than we have time for here, so look out for next month's full scale review. But after a quick preview the general feeling in the office was an overall rating well into the 90s for this one!



Tic Tac, who's there?

CORRIDORS OF GENON

Producer: **New Generation**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**

This is a rather clever form of maze game in which you hear your chaser more than you see him or it. The hero of the piece is yourself, of course, and your adversary is a madly cloning Bogul. You find yourself in the corridors of Genon, a complex of concentric circles with the evil computer of Genon at its centre. Each circular corridor has many doors which open or shut by sliding down from the roof, and the corridors themselves are linked at intervals by similar sliding doors.

The object of the game is to thread your way through the complex, find the computer and then break a secret code which will destroy it. Each of the doors is given a three figure code which, if punched in, will either open or shut the door. As you start some of the doors are open and some shut. Your adversary, Bogul, is strong in ESP and can close the doors ahead of you and open them behind in an effort to catch up with you. He also clones himself as time goes by.

The screen display is in 3D, showing the corridors radiating away from you, a clear green floor, white ceiling and alternating red and yellow corridors gives a very solid impression of a real building. New Generation provide a numeric overlay for the keyboard which is used in the game for code breaking. Above the display and to either side it says 'Next Door Code 217' or, as your ESP level drops, more likely, 'Next Door Code ???'. When Bogul catches up with your the screen flashes and some of your ESP level fades. When it's right out, you've had it.

CRITICISM

'The most imaginative touch in this game is the sound of Bogul's footsteps echoing through the corridors as he chases after you. After a while of playing it screws the tension up unbearably, making you slip on the keyboard and fumble the code numbers something terrible! If you happen to be facing in the right direction you actually see the horrid little black thing come stumping up the corridor to get you. The graphics are quite good and it's a simple idea for a game, but one which works very well. I haven't got to the computer yet, but there is a practice mode for code breaking.'

'Very good and effective sound on this game, the footsteps tracking you, doors opening and slamming shut. The practice mode for code breaking is useful, although if you select it and then fail to understand how the system operates, you're trapped in the mode for ever! I was bit confused even though it works on the Mastermind idea of giving you black dots for right numbers and more black dots for numbers in the right sequence etc. Getting through the corridor doors is more difficult in the end since doors ahead and to the sides all run in numeric sequences. It's okay when you're being told what the code is, but as your ESP slips away you have to be pretty good at following complex sequences or very good at code breaking. An unusual game and more exciting than I thought it was going to be when I started playing it.'

'If you like 3D maze games, then you'll probably like Genon — it certainly isn't in the normal run of such games. I found it rather confusing — you do have to have some sort of head for numbers to play it well. The graphics are simply designed and very good and the sound is terrific. I would think it addictive, even though it didn't really grab me over much.'

A solid 3D effect in the CORRIDORS OF GENON.
Look over your shoulder and what's that? You're about to be Bogulised again.

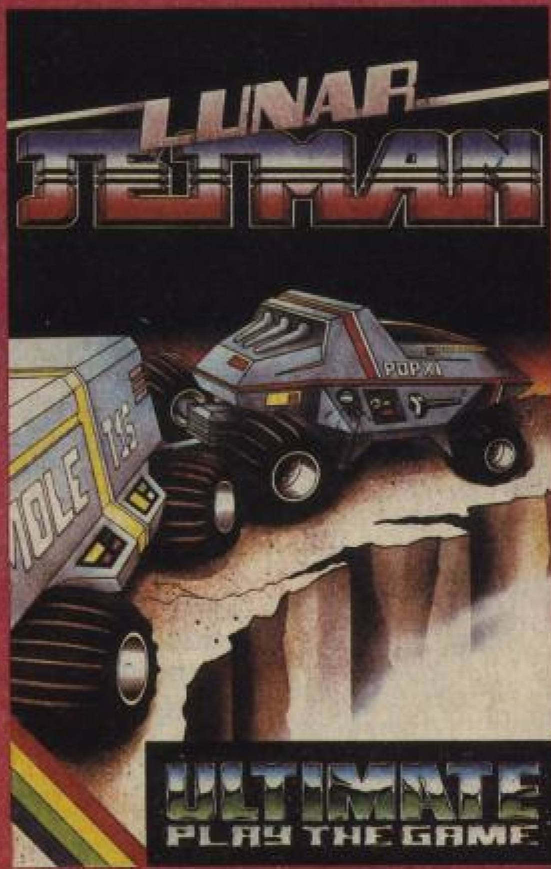


COMMENTS

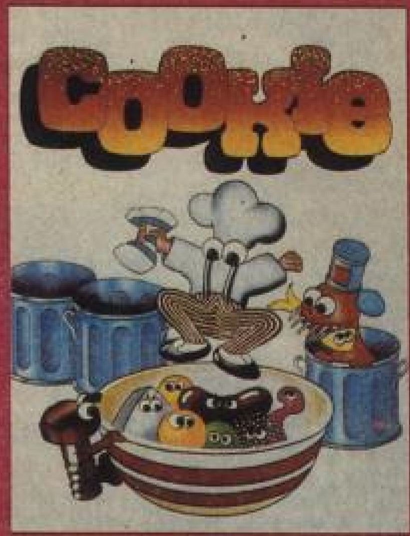
Keyboard positions: Cursor keys for movement and 9 keys used in conjunction with an overlay provided.
Joystick option: Kempston, AGF or Protek
Keyboard play: reasonable
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: effective 3D
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: 3
Lives: depends on falling ESP rate
General rating: an unusually addictive game for those who don't mind a bit of figuring.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	70%
Playability	68%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	75%
Overall	72%

LUNAR JETMAN – 48K ZX Spectrum



COOKIE – 16/48K ZX Spectrum



LUNAR JETMAN – For the **48K Sinclair ZX Spectrum**
LUNAR JETMAN – The Ultimate Intergalactic **G.A.S. (Graphic Arcade Simulation)** Adventure Space Battle.
LUNAR JETMAN – Arcade standard, 100% machine code, incredible sound effects, amazing smooth high resolution graphics, the totally new addictive concept and all those extra features you expect from the **ULTIMATE** games people.
Design – The **ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME** design team.

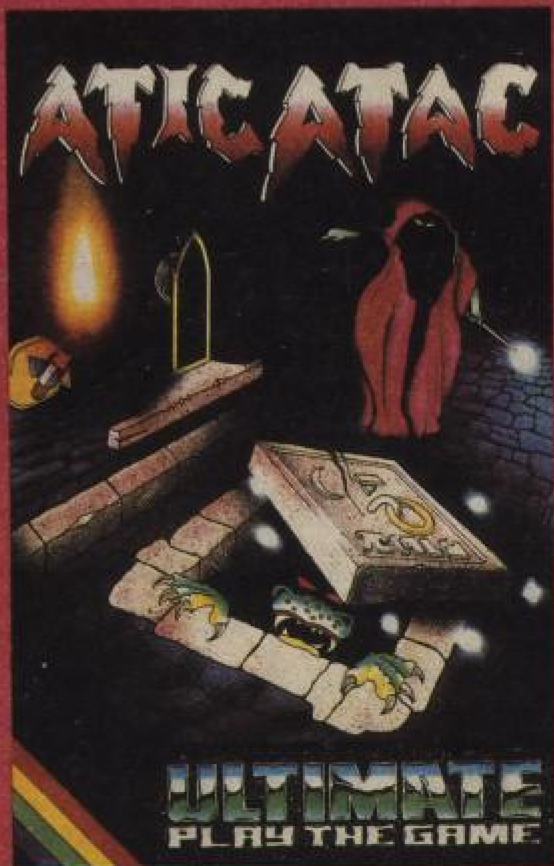
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JET PAC – 16/48K ZX Spectrum or 8K Expanded VIC 20

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RIVER RESCUE

Producer: **Thorn EMI**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Phil Snell**

River Rescue might be described an an overhead scramble game. You are looking down on the river from above and, as in a scramble game, your boat moves along, or rather the banks scroll backwards. Accelerating takes the boat up to the right side of the screen in which position your reaction time has to be very good indeed. The obstacles in your path (river that is) are crocodiles, logs and small islands. These have to be dodged, although the boat is equipped with a gun. If you hit a croc it will disappear, but logs take a few shots and islands you can't damage at all.

The object of the game is to rescue a stranded party of explorers from the jungles of the northern (top) bank where they are threatened by natives. There are two jetties, one on each bank, opposite each other. Once you have picked up an explorer, you must navigate the river safely and then deposit him on the south bank jetty. You can pick up as many as six, but only one explorer per call, before letting them off on the south bank, for which exploit you receive bonus points. Shooting crocodiles also earns bonus points, and so does riding the river on the right hand side of the screen. Every time you sink you lose any explorers on board.

If you are successful, another hazard appears. Your deadly rivals are trying to stop you and their planes will fly over, dropping mines in the water which must be shot away.

CRITICISM

'An engaging and addictive game. The response to the keys is so positive that it's easy to run into a bank. Stopping at a jetty is a skilled task as well. Go too fast or misjudge by a milimeter and both boat and jetty go up! The animation of the crocodiles is simply and effectively done — they are the most realistic crocs I've yet seen. Very good.'

'Basically a simple idea and, as is usually the case, an addictive one to play. The graphics are quite attractive, especially the title page where the RIVER RESCUE *is wiped away by a shoal (is that the right word?) of crocodiles. Very neat. Excellent control response.'*

'I liked the game very much and it works very well. It does get harder and harder as you go along, more crocodiles, more logs, bigger sandbanks and the damned rivals in their planes. Very addictive and quite original.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: very good, Q/A up/down, O/P left/right and zero for fire and undock from a jetty
Joystick options: Kempston, Sinclair
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: straightforward but effective
Graphics: smooth and well drawn
Sound: good
Skill levels: gets harder
Lives: 6
Games: 1 or 2 player
General rating: very good, reasonably addictive.

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	70%
Playability	80%
Getting started	70%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	78%
Overall	74%



ROAD RACER

Producer: **Thorn EMI**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Graham Wisdom**

Five brand new games from the Thorn EMI giants, their first venture into Spectrum territory, is obviously a big event. *Road Racer*, as its name suggests, is a go at that elusive Spectrum copy of the famous and wonderful arcade game. This is the most detailed version yet. In addition to left/right, brake/accelerate there is also a high and low speed gear selection. The lower third of the screen shows you your tachometer and speedometer and the gear you are in.

Unusually, keeping your finger down on the accelerator key doesn't just take you to maximum speed, but puts you over the top and into the red on the tacho. If you stay there too long you'll blow your engine. Changing into the low gear while in the red will also cause damage.

There are several other cars to overtake before the finish line appears.

CRITICISM

'This is a very good attempt to create the perspective feel of the arcade original. The road narrows as it approaches the horizon, which is a landscape of mountains. Sadly the road ahead is not curved as it is in the arcade version but you soon realise that it does bend because the landscape swings around. Unfortunately, because the road doesn't actually bend, it means the car stays on line and you aren't forced to steer round both bends. The graphics are very brightly coloured and smooth, and the game is extremely playable.'

'Very good packaging and instructions, but the one thing they don't tell you is how to start up. On pressing the start key you must instantly accelerate and get into top gear, otherwise you will never find out that you're the white car and the green one behind you (which I thought was 'me') crashes into you. Once that's sorted out, it really takes off and, if you are using the keyboard which is well laid out, there's some skill to be mastered in using the brakes and gears sensibly. time is the real enemy to beat in this very good version.'

'I've got the feeling that there's still a better road racing game for the Spectrum than we've yet seen, but this is the best one yet in my opinion. It's exciting and if you like the game idea, very compelling to play.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: good, 1/2 lo/hi gear, 6/7 left/right, 8/9 brake accelerate
Joystick options: Kempston, Sinclair
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: good, slightly jerky character movement on other cars
Sound: poor, why no motor noise?
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
General rating: good

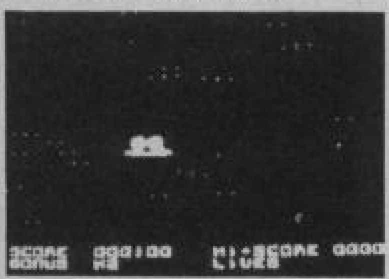
Use of computer	70%
Graphics	68%
Playability	75%
Getting started	62%
Addictive qualities	72%
Value for money	70%
Overall	69½%

BLOCKADE RUNNER

Producer: **Thorn EMI**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Graham Johns**

Okay, fasten your seat harness — it's a deep space zappowham game again! Just when you thought they'd run out of reasonably original ideas for shoot em up games, along comes *Blockade Runner*!

You're in this ship which is trying to get supplies through an alien blockade of Earth, and there are five layers of defence to be got through. First comes a dense meteor shower which can be dodged or shot. Next comes a series of vertical laser barriers which cannot be shot and you must avoid contact with them. They are followed by tractor-beam units which push or pull you off course. And then finally there is the fleet of alien ships which will try to blast you away. If you manage to survive all this you must then transfer your cargo pods to an Earth ship. There are only three chances to do this right, or it's back to the start without losing a life.



Screen 1 from BLOCKADE RUNNER.

GENERAL

One complaint from our reviewers which seemed common to some of the games from Thorn EMI was the choice of control keys for non-joystick players. Of course it isn't their fault that keys **6,7,8,9** and **zero** have been employed, since this is the daft non-standard Sinclair chose for their interface 2. Sinclair are hoping to bully every other software house into using it too, or changing their existing software to match it. The cursor keys are already a poor game arrangement, and to move one key along the board is no better. We all felt a more ergonomic arrangement like **Q,A,O,P** or Z,X,K,M is much better. It seems a pity Thorn EMI haven't chosen to provide an alternative or user-defined keyboard layout.

CRITICISM

'For shoot em up addicts this is going to be popular. There is a fair range of obstacles to overcome and plenty of speed levels to play at. On the first screen of meteors it frightened the life out of me at how fast the ship manoeuvres. When you get to the second screen and see the laser barriers you realise why it has to be so fast. Good, simple graphics and smooth movement.'

'The graphics are quite small except for your ship which looks like a film camera, but they are pretty smooth in movement and the explosions are good. I like the fact that if you lose a life in, say, the second or third screen you aren't sent right back to start but pick up on the same screen. The speeds are about right, with the highest level being a blurr. Medium addictive, I would say.'

'There is sound on this game, I noticed that the others from Thorn seemed a bit lacking in that department. The graphics are nice especially the dancing star background, but I found it didn't have lasting appeal overall.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: akward, 6/7 left/right, 8/9 up/down and zero to fire.
Joystick options: Kempston, Sinclair
Keyboard play: very fast and responsive **Use of colour:** average
Graphics: reasonable and smooth
Sound: average
Skill levels: 6
Lives: 5
Screens: 6
General rating: fairly good, mixed opinions on addictivity.

Use of computer	55%
Graphics	58%
Playability	67%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	50%
Value for money	65%
Overall	62½%

GOLD RUSH

Producer: **Thorn EMI**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Martin Harris**

Gold Rush does not take place in California as you might expect but on the far off planet of Oron. The gold mines of Oron are bottomless caverns where gold nuggets rain from the roof. Oronians, it seems, have an odd way of collecting the gold. Two pots are placed in suspension between the walls and then girders are used to direct the falling nuggets into the pots. It's a dicey task because should a nugget hit an Oronian it kills him, and the mine is full of monsters that find Oronians make a tasty meal.

The playing screen is split into three vertical segments. In the centre is the mine shaft divided into an 8 by 9 character square checkerboard of red and black. At the base, evenly spaced, are the two collecting pots. To the right is a blue sector where the girders are positioned, ready for use. To the right is another blue area, a safe home from which your Oronians start off, but to which they cannot return. The monsters are gaping, yellow skulls which float up and down and from side to side, mouths agape.

What you do is take an Oronian out into the mine and, using the directional keys, place him where you want a girder to be. Pressing the fire key then slots a yellow girder in position. When a nugget hits one, it will roll to the right or to the left, so the construction has to be well thought out to keep those nuggets a-comin' into the pots. Points are scored for every nugget that hits a girder and many more for getting one into a pot. In their efforts to prevent you collecting gold the skulls will move the girders about and, on the highest level, eat the nuggets.

CRITICISM

'All these games have very good title pages, and *Gold Rush* in particular has an innovative looking hi-score table. The game itself is quite original in concept and one of those I would call silly but likeable. It is quite frustrating to play and begins to get addictive the more you do. It starts off simply enough, with only one skull and not many nuggets to contend with, but as you progress more and more skulls appear. At the highest level of skill you can still move at the same pace but the nuggets come pouring down and it is very difficult. Not a bad game at all.'

'The graphics are good, with the heads of the Oronians and the skulls turning as they move. It's all quite smooth and colourful too. But once again this game has no sound which seems a terrible shame.'

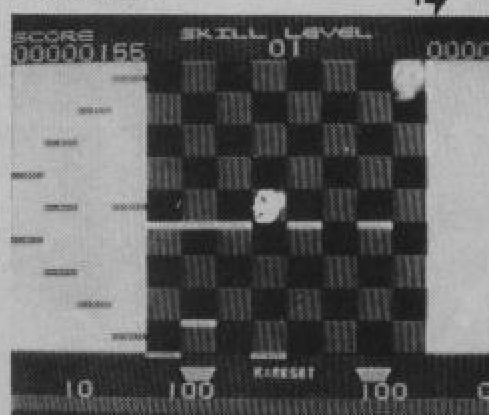
'Sound would have helped, but in the end this is an engaging game to play, and not as easy as it first appears.

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: two options, both slightly odd, the Sinclair keys 6/7/8/9 and zero, or Q/O left/right, I/W up/down and P to fire.
Joystick options: Kempston, Sinclair
Keyboard play: very responsive and smooth
Use of colour: fairly good
Graphics: simple but smoothly moving
Sound: none
Skill levels: 5
Lives: 3
General rating: average to good, and unusually addictive

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	58%
Playability	68%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	58%
Value for money	60%
Overall	63%

Catch the nuggets, avoid the skulls — GOLDRUSH.



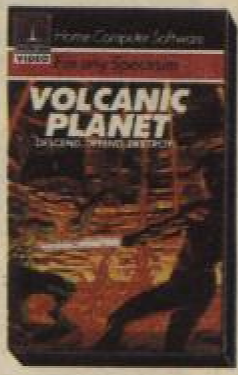
YOU CAN'T BEAT THORN EMI'S NEW S



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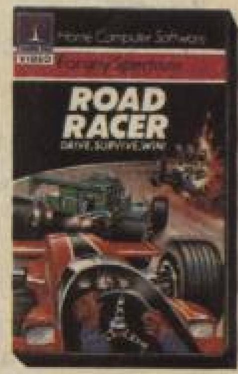
Our new Spectrum games have two skill levels. Difficult and impossible.



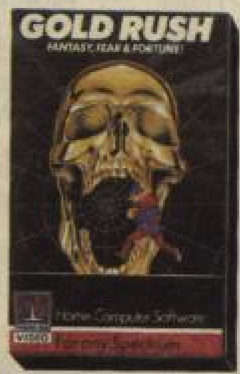
Unless you happen to be a genius, it could take forever to master them all.

So for around £6.95, you will really be getting your money's worth.

"Volcanic Planet" (on 16k) is a real scorcher. Plant a bomb on the volcanic plug in the evil Zeron underground Metropolis, and escape before red hot lava floods the city. Watch out for the Zeron's bone crushing slaves, they want to tear you apart. If your oxygen or power supplies run out, you're dead.

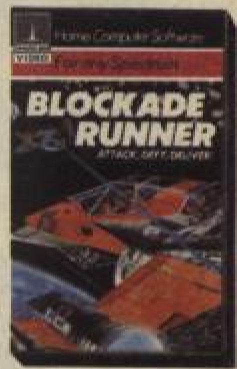


In "Road Racer" (on 16k) you'll find out if you're skilful enough to drive round a terrifying track at death defying speeds, and reach the black and white flag in one piece.



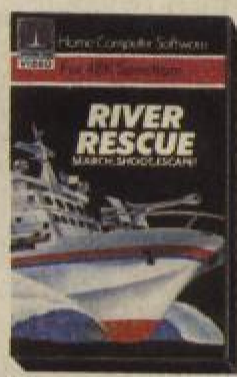
"Gold Rush" (on 16k) is no walk-over either. Underneath the eerie planet of Oron is a vast cavern full of gold and demons.

You have to get the gold and the deadly demons have to get you.



In "Blockade Runner" (on 16k) the earth is under siege and you must get life-saving supplies through.

When you've avoided the dense meteor shower, the moving laser barriers, the space mines, the tractor beam units and the alien warships, you'll be good enough to try the other 5 skill levels.



"River Rescue" (on 48k) is a runaway success on other formats. It's now available on Spectrum. You'll have to navigate the wildest and most dangerous river on earth in a powerful patrol-boat. But keep a sharp look-out for the killer crocodiles. They haven't eaten all day.

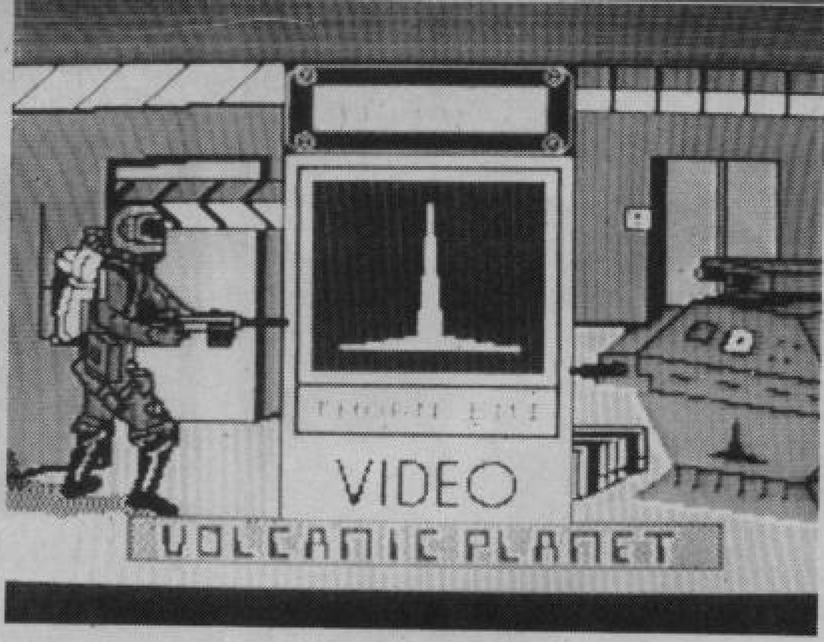
Win, lose or draw, you can't beat THORN EMI's Spectrum games. Now available from WH Smith and other leading software stockists.

THORN EMI VIDEO

Leaders in home entertainment.

VOLCANIC PLANET

Producer: **Thorn EMI**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Nick Burroughs**



It is your task to destroy the evil race of Zerans, who live on the volcanic planet of Zeras. To do this you must make your way through an underground metropolis to the depths of the city, where you will find a volcanic plug. If you can plant your plasma bomb there, you will blow up the planet. But you must make your escape before the city fills up with lava. Okay?

The Zerans resemble purplish coloured amoebas and they scutter round the city complex in company with their much bigger slaves. Often the Zerans will ignore you, but they may try to crush you. 'You' resemble a little black spider.

There are five skill levels and depending on which one you select there are between 3 and 15 levels to the city. The display shows you only a tiny part of the whole complex (of one floor). There is a map at the top right hand corner of the entire floor you are on and looking at it gives hou a headache! It's huge.

Your protection is a suit or armour which wears down as the Zerans fire at you. When it's gone the two other systems, power and bio system, become vulnerable and you die if they fail. Your blaster has plenty of charge, but that too runs down with use. These four are shown as falling bar codes at the bottom of the screen. Here and there in the maze you will come across various objects like tool repair kits and spare oxygen, but you must be quick because a Zeran will take them if he gets there first.

To go to another floor you must find the lifts, which are going up and down all the while. When you enter one (wait for it to arrive at your floor) you can activate it but you won't know whether it's going up or down, only the indicator at the left of screen tells you this. Entering an up lift on the top floor replenishes all your armour and power. Lifts only connect between 2 floors, otherwise it would be too easy!

CRITICISM

'This is a very complex and complicated game to play. The graphics really are very good, colourful and very smooth, with 8-directional movement and continuous fire. The effect of the blaster is wonderful, great bolts of yellow mingled with red. It all has a satisfyingly violent feeling to it. My only complaint is with the keyboard layout, directional keys all in a line are awkward to use instinctively.'

'If you enjoy large mazes then this is bound to be a winner! The complex is massive and it's crawling with the enemy. Skill in moving and firing take a while to get together. The damned lifts don't help either with your never knowing where they're going. On the whole a playable and fairly addictive game with original looking graphics. But what happened to the sound?'

'I never find maze games enjoyable to play, but this game offers load of enemies to go round zapping (good blaster effect). What **is** good is the way the aliens get excited if you shoot one of their number. All the others visible on the screen start dancing round as though they were actually hopping mad! I never got anywhere near planting my plasma bomb, even on the lowest skill level — it's a game with plenty of playing scope. I'm sure it would be even better if there was some sound.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: a lot of keys to use. Direction is abit odd; 6/7 left/right, 8/9 up down. Zero fires blaster, 5 operates a lift, 4 plants the plasma bomb.
Joystick options: Kempston, Sinclair
Keyboard play: very responsive in 8 directions
Use of colour: good
Sound: none
Skill levels: 5
Lives: 1
Screens: 15
General rating: very good, pity about the lack of sound.

Use of computer	45%
Graphics	75%
Playability	77%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	65%
Value for money	73%
Overall	69%

Oh Mummy

Producer: **Gem Software**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£4.95**
Language: **machine code**

You are in charge of a party of archaelogists exploring Egyptian tombs. Each tomb has five levels, and on each you will find treasure, a scroll, a key, a mummy of the royal family, and two guardians. As soon as you enter a tomb one of the guardians will be awakened and start chasing you. The other will remain dormant unless you are unlucky enough to uncover it. Fortunately when you uncover the magic scroll, one of the guardians will be killed off. You can only exit a tomb once the key has been uncovered.

After completing all five tombs you move on to another five where the guardians are more cunning.

The game resembles a grid/painter type in as much as the buried artifacts all lie within 20 squares. These are uncovered by taking 'your party' round all four sides of a square, whereupon the contents are made visible. Any guardian that has come to life and not been killed off with a scroll, will follow you onto the next level! Treasure houses, of which there are a few, are good for hiding in if you get into a tight corner.

CRITICISM

'Redefinable control keys are essential in any program today. This one has them. There's a good use of colour with detailed graphics, continuous sound and good tunes. I found it well put together and addictive to play.'

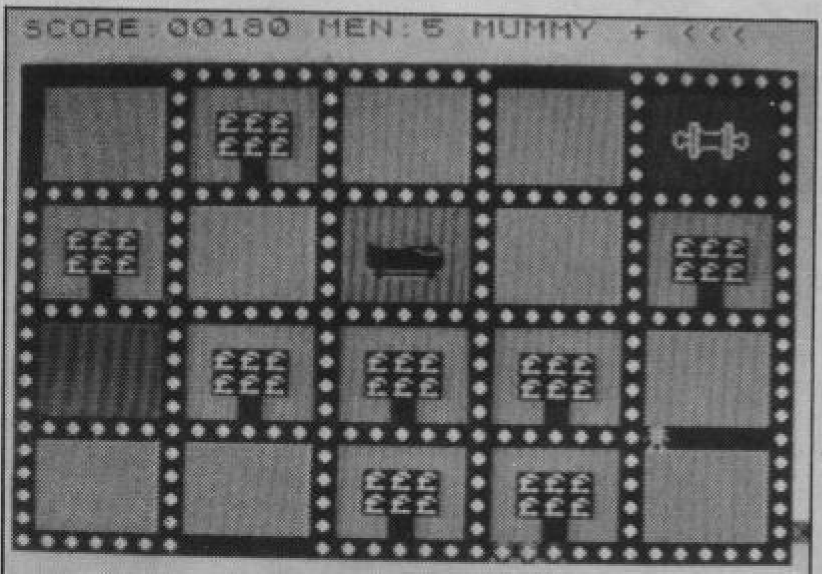
'I wouldn't rate this as a marvellous game, but it isn't a poor one either. The graphics are well up to standard and there is a soothingly mesmerising quality in playing it. But I thought there wasn't enough danger element to make it completely riveting.'

'On the easy level it quickly becomes monotonous, but at the higher speed and difficulty levels it isn't easy to get through, since the guardians are more intelligent in their chasing. Good graphics and sound. Perhaps more fun than addictive.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: user-

I want my Mummy!



defined
Joystick options: cursor controllers via user-defined
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: good
Sound: good
Skill levels: fifteen
Lives: five
General rating: good — fun to play

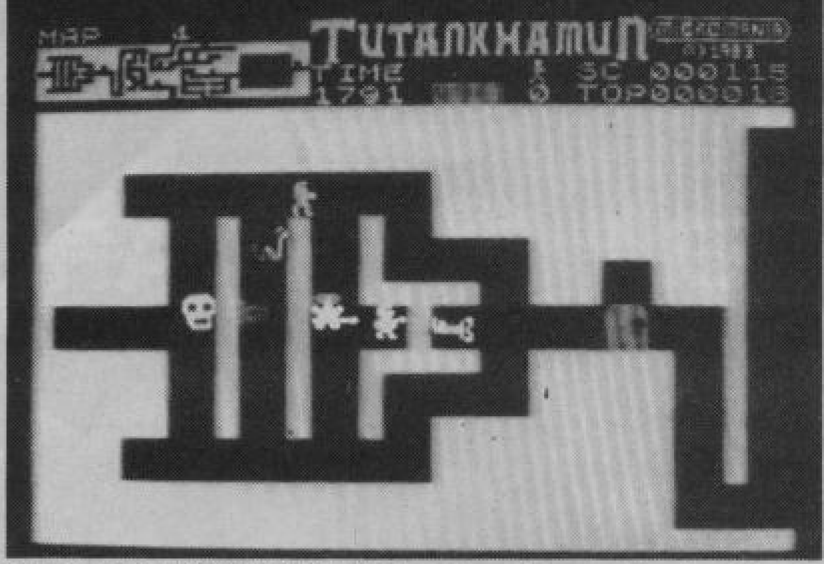
Use of computer:	**75%**
Graphics:	**65%**
Playability	**69%**
Getting started:	**80%**
Addictive qualities:	**55%**
Value for money:	**70%**
Overall:	**69%**

Tutankhamun

Producer: **Micromania**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Dominic Wood**

Tut was an Egyptian ruler who stowed much treasure in his pyramid. Your job, as grave robber extraordinary (or archaeologist — they mean much the same thing) is to enter the tomb and collect as much of the treasure as you can. There are five different tombs and you can start at one and work your way through, or enter the game at a later stage if you wish.

The very good packaging contains clear instructions and the tomb turns out to be a left/right scrolling maze with vertical tunnel connectionns from top to base of screen and vice versa. The treasure is collected by moving over it, and life would be easy were it not for the host of monsters lurking in the tombs. These include mummies (the wrapped up kind), cobras, spiders, skulls and others, all of which move rapidly and decidedly in your direction. Fortunately, you are provided with a rapid firing laser. It fires regularly by itself but can be put into continuous fire if you like. Unfortunately it only fires horizontally, so you're very vulnerable to beasties coming from above and below. There is also one smart bomb per tomb or life, but its effects are very short-lived indeed. To help there is a map of the entire tomb layout at the top of the screen.



Killing monsters in TUTANKHAMUN is easy — getting past them is not.

GENERAL

Joystick options are offered, but the keyboard layout is quite sensible. **A/Z** = up/down, **N/M** = left/right. A pause and restart facility is provided.

CRITICISM

'*Tutankhamun* is an original game that uses very good, detailed graphics. It all works very smoothly too. A game with a nice difference, very addictive — I wonder what happens when you reach Tutankhamun's tomb?'

The graphics really are very attractive, with loads of colour, and fast moving. Controlling your man can be alarming as he fires independently and tends to zig zag about if you leave his control keys alone for very long. There is plenty of scope for enjoyment since surviving is no easy task.'

'The multi-coloured monsters come thick and fast, so much so that you've got to be ace at getting round them and making sure you're in a left/right corridor so your laser will work. If you get stuck and have to move up or down with creatures sailing at you, the smart bomb will give you about two seconds' grace. Pretty addictive stuff.'

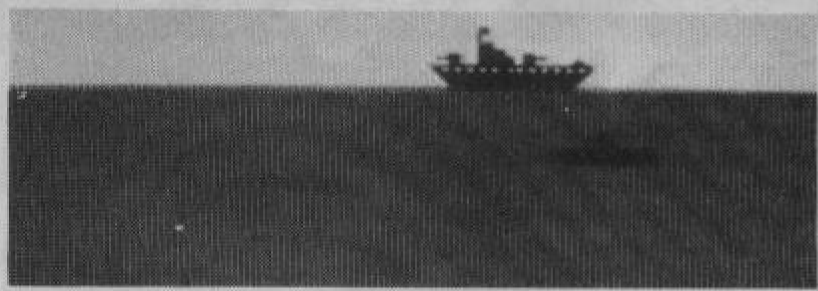
COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: well laid out
Joystick options: Kempston or AGF and Protek
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: marvellous
Graphics: detailed and smooth
Sound: good tunes, but not enough of them
Skill levels: over eight
Lives: five
Screens: five
General rating: a very good maze/zap game with a different feel

Use of computer:	**70%**
Graphics:	**70%**
Playability	**74%**
Getting started:	**70%**
Addictive qualities:	**75%**
Value for money:	**70%**
Overall:	**71½%**

SUB CHASE

Producer: **Gem Software**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£4.95**
Language: **machine code**


Run silent, run deep in SUBCHASE.

In *Sub Chase* you control an anti-submarine ship which is armed with depth charges. Depending on the level of play you have between thirty five and fifty to explode. The display shows your ship on the surface of a very calm sea, and under the surface, the submarines appear from the left moving straight across to the right.

You fire the depth charges by pressing the numerical keys, each one setting the depth at which the charge will explode. In return, some of the subs fire back with missiles which you must dodge. At the highest level the subs appear at all sorts of depths and will even change from one level to another. The skill is in setting the correct depth at which to explode the charge and in the timing of sending it on its way.

CRITICISM

'A hard game to master at the higher levels because the sub moves up and down, but with simple controls it should appeal to some. Not one of the modern complex games and easy to play.'

'The graphics are attractive — if you're unlucky enough to be hit by a missile, your ship blows up in bits and sinks. But I think the game in its present state is too simple to appeal to hardened arcade addicts. It could do with many more subs on screen at one time.'

'While it isn't as easy as I first thought, *Sub Chase* is too quiet to have addictivity. Perhaps it is aimed more at the younger market. Young kids should certainly find it fun to play, but zap em freaks will get bored.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: simple with only left/right, but was Q/P the best option — it's quite a stretch. Numerics for fire.
Use of colour: fair
Graphics: simple but well drawn
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 4
Lives: 1
General rating: fair for addicts, good for children

Use of computer	**45%**
Graphics	**49%**
Playability	**50%**
Getting started	**60%**
Addictive qualities	**40%**
Value for money	**47%**
Overall	**48½%**

Reviews continue on 41

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SHOOT 'EM UP!

INVADERS GALAXIANS

CHRIS PASSEY & LLOYD MANGRAM revisit some old favourites in this, the first of our Game Type comparisons

Software houses seem hellbent on providing us with numerous versions of arcade copies. In August this year, *Ian Sinclair* of *IJK* (a software company who do games for the Oric and Beeb) said, 'There seems to be a difference of opinion between the public and reviewers' opinions of programmes.

'The public loves arcade copies, while reviewers hate them, and original games have the opposite effect. I would like to see more comparative reviews with all the Space Invaders, for example, compared and the good and bad points of each shown.'



Since he said that, there has been plenty of evidence to suggest that original games do go down just as well with the public as old favourites and arcade copies; Imagine, Ultimate and Quicksilva have all proved it. However, there is a wealth of games on the same theme available for the Spectrum, so every month we will take a close look at a particular type and compare the various versions. Unfortunately there isn't sufficient space to compare every single version in each case (pac man games are legion), but we have done our best to find a wide mixture. This month we take a look at Invaders and Galaxians.

SPACE INTRUDERS *Quicksilva*
SPACE RAIDERS *Sinclair*
GALACTIC TROOPER *Romik*
GALAKZIONS *Mikrogen*
GALAXIANS *Artic* **WINGED AVENGER** *Workforce*
FIREBIRDS *Softek* **THE DETECTIVE** *Arcade*
ARCADIA *Imagine*

SPACE INTRUDERS

There was general agreement from our two players that the Space Invader game, whilst good for its time, was pretty much out of date today, so that should be borne in mind when comparing it to some of the more original phoenix and galaxian games. However, Quicksilva's Space Intruders was summarised as being a, 'reasonable copy of the original arcade game.'

This is a close copy of the original. The aliens are a bit small but do include a wobbly mutant worth extra points, as well as the customary space ship across the top of the screen. Although this is a fast version, the shelters at the bottom of the screen disappear in blocks rather than the original's erosion.
CP
I was a bit disappointed with it, never having played this particular version before. The aliens were disappointing although there are four types as in the original, Invader games suffer from comparison anyway because they are older and there is much better software around.
LM

SPACE RAIDERS

A close copy of the original. Slightly better graphics than Space Intruder; for instance, the shelters erode away when hit, and the aliens are better drawn. On the other hand this is slower than the Quicksilva version, so it loses it interest pretty soon.
CP
Another Invader copy which has dated badly. The graphics were more interesting than in Space Intruder, but generally far too slow to be much fun for long despite the machine code.
LM

GALACTIC TROOPER

The graphics are fairly attractive but I think the arcade qualities of the game are low. You have three speeds of play but at each speed, of course, the relationship of the elements remains the same, and I found that skill didn't enter into it. Avoiding the bombs is too much a matter of luck as the space allowed to dodge them is small and the relative rates of movement doesn't seem right. I think the game suffers from being dated now.
CP
Despite the use of the word Galactic in the title, this is more of an Invader type, but pretty simple at that. Romik manage to pack a lot of graphics onto the screen, a mothership sliding left/right across the top, 10 vertical bomb racks with 5 aliens per rack, and the occasional saucer floating around which is easy to hit. Hitting aliens is simply because they sit in a stacked row. Shooting the falling bombs is pointless because there isn't enough room left. Sideways ship movement and rate of fire compared to the bombs is too slow. Generally fun to play, if not exactly arcade excitement level.
LM

GALAXZIONS

I suppose it's a reasonable copy, but where is the fuel and the mothership? The graphics are simple but quite fast and there is a choice of three speeds. Rate of fire is too fast, making it easy to exterminiate the swooping hordes. You can use a Mikrogen II joystick – if you've got one. I didn't think it was worth the price asked.
CP
I remember this one coming out and thinking it wasn't bad at the time, although it doesn't have the arcade original's details. The graphics are reasonably smooth but I thought the aliens looked more like Invaders than anything else. Another drawback is that by remaining stationary you can still get a respectable score! One or two player games.
LM

GALAXIANS

A much better Galaxian copy with the aliens using the original formations ie leader swoops down flanked by two generals making him harder to hit. Again, no fuel, no mothership. This was much more challenging than Mikrogen's version, especially on level 6, and is obivously better value at a pound less. One or two players and the game is Kempston compatible.
CP
This is much better all round, bigger and better looking aliens, and explosions in hi-res graphics. It's also got far more playing speeds — nine in all.
LM



WINGED AVENGER

It's got eggs, birds and eventually the mothership, but with the exception of the birds flapping their wings, the graphics are boring. It is a reasonable copy, but by today's standards rather poor. The laser shield is almost too effective. There are several game/speed variations to experiment with, but on the whole uninspiring.
CP
The speed of this phoenix version always takes my breath away, but I learned sometime back that it's actually easier to get better scores by playing the higher speeds. In the slower speeds you try to be accurate (never a good idea!) but faster you seem to get a better rhythm going. Sadly the graphics are small and dull and the overall impression is disappointing.
LM

FIREBIRDS

This starts off with you having to shoot a flock of ballet-dancing red birds. If you're successful they return with the blue weavers, which fire lasers straight down at you. Blast this bunch and they all come back with the white bombers, moving vertically down the screen. Finally the huge mothership is taken on, but watch out for the suicidal guards! Graphics are smooth, excellent sound and great fun to play. Demo mode when not in use.
CP
Firebirds is instantly appealing visually, with its cinema curtain opening and closing, and the brightly coloured and animated aliens. Good sound too. I particularly like the victory dance the firebirds do when you lose a life. Not easy to get to the mothership and frustrating when you're within an inch and on your last life. A good, fast game.
LM

THE DETECTIVE

'Chuck, they know what yer doing and they're out to get ya!' She means the Mob, and they're after the secrets of the safe - so are you. From the cover you could be forgiven for thinking that this is a 1940s Chicago adventure, but actually it's an arcade game, where you run back and forth shooting at various things such as 'lips', things on legs firing lasers, little men, arrows, bomb-dropping helicopters, aricraft etc. Eventually you enter 'dagger alley' where men throw daggers at you. At level 25 you get a chance to open the safe. Additional hazards include indestructible falling tyres and a canine point-thief. Keyboard layout is quite good but I thought the man moves slowly. Also I think I spotted a bug in the scoring which sometimes gave me F lives and SSS points.
CP
Despite its name and scenario, this is definitely a galaxian variant, and a rich one too. Dodging the tyres which gather in rows and fall on you gets to be difficult when at the same time you're avoiding the other objects and the little dog that pops up now and again and steals points from you. Fortunately its a wrap around screen, otherwise it would all be impossible! Arcade seem to design games that look easy at first, but being so long tend to wear you down until you start making mistakes. I liked the way that towards the end of each screen the aliens get less and so it all speeds up enormously. Good spread of joystick options. Perhaps it's only fair to point out that with 48K in play it has an obvious advantage over the other games in this bunch.
LM

ARCADIA

'Dual Plasma Disruptors and Ion Thrust Drive' is how Imagine describe the good ship Arcadia. They aren't far wrong. This highly manoeuvrable ship has enough fire power to send the average aliens packing. Alas these are not average aliens (Atarian Battle Fleet with Imagine's usual touch of humour). Twelve attack waves, each wave for a set period of time, each more suicidal than the last. It's highly addictive, with superb graphics (fantastic coloured explosions) and the sound is good too. Definitely up to arcade standards.
CP
Although graphically this is more simple looking than The Detective, it has to be considered as one of the shoot 'em up classics. They've given you a certain area of up/down movement as well as left/right. Each wave of aliens gets lower and lower, zooming in from the right each time. Keyboard positions are sensible, but you can use a Kempston joystick with the utility Softlink II, and Fuller joystick. If you enjoy the sort of games we're discussing here, then I think this is going to be considered as one of the most addictive.
LM

INVADERS/GALAXIANS COMPARISON TABLE

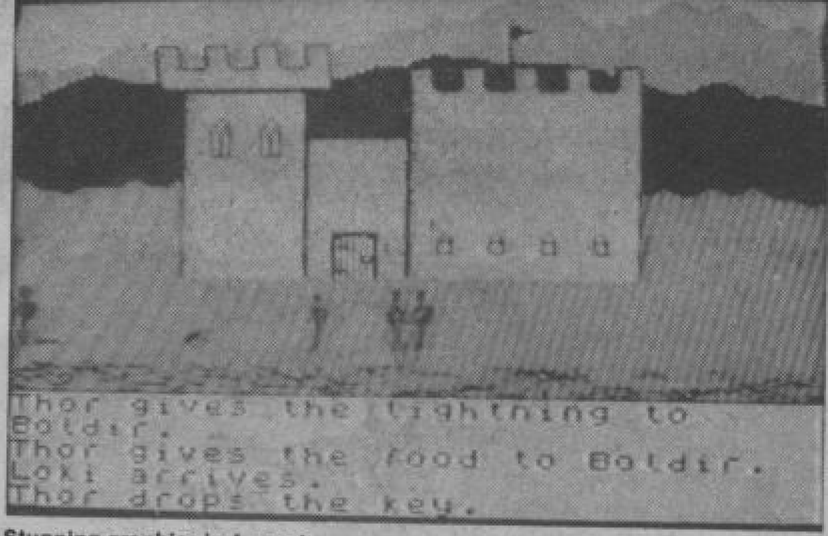
The points shown in columns **A, B, C** are percentages and represent the average between the two reviewers. Use of Spectrum includes graphics quality, sound quality and ease of keyboard control. The games are not listed in order of preference.

A — Use of Spectrum
B — Addictive Qualities
C — Value for money
D — memory required
E — Recommended Retail Price (in £)

TABLE	A	B	C	D	E
SPACE INTRUDERS	45	40	40	16	4.95
SPACE RAIDERS	50	35	40	16	4.95
GALACTIC TROOPER	50	40	45	16	5.95
GALAKZIONS	45	40	30	16	5.95
GALAXIANS	55	50	55	16	4.95
WINGED AVENGER	50	35	40	16	4.95
FIREBIRDS	85	75	80	16	5.95
THE DETECTIVE	80	75	85	48	5.50
ARCADIA	90	90	90	16	5.50

Automata find a heaven in Hollywood and Legend a Valhalla in hell.

Two long and eagerly awaited Adventure software events have burst upon us, and neither can be adequately summed up in review. If you're in to Adventures you'll undoubtedly want to get hold of *Valhalla*, the much advertised and much delayed 'moviesoft' adventure from **Legend**, and the new game from those bunch of weirdos at **Automata**, the followup to *PiMania, My Name is Uncle GROUCHO You Win a Fat Cigar*.



Stunning graphics in Asgard.

Valhalla

Producer: **Legend**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£14.95**
Language: **machine code**

Before you can start playing *Valhalla* it's worth ploughing through the readable instruction booklet, not only to find out what you can do, when and where, but also to meet some of the more important characters who partake of your adventure.

The book tells you that you can have great fun simply watching Valhalla, and issuing commands to the characters. This turns out to be true in part. Life in the Nordic haven carries on much like *Coronation Street* with the inhabitants quarrelling, fighting each other, offering food and generally behaving as if they were in the Rover's Return. But in the end this palls and you feel itchy to get into the action. There are six quests to find special objects; **ofnir** (a key), **drapnir** (a ring), **skornir** (a shield), **skalir** (a sword), **Felstrong** (an axe) and **frimnir** (a helmet).

Finding these magical objects is not simple, and some, if discovered, must be deposited safely as you can't carry all of them together. Added to that, if you die, which happens easily enough, you are sent to Hell (not to 'would you like another game') which turns out to be a location or two away from the more ordinary delights of Asgaard of whatever. Unfortunately if you go to Hell most of the things you've collected are removed from you and distributed randomly around the various locations, so you have to start all over.

When this is seen in the context of coping with large numbers of beings who are either well or badly disposed towards you, you begin to realise the complexity of even surviving in Valhalla, let alone finding the hidden objects. Getting on with our fellow Valhallans is surprisingly realistic. Unlike *The Hobbit* you can't type in 'Say hello to Elrond,' and expect a happy response but you can offer food or wine (which abounds — all over the floor), you can offer to sell or buy objects since you have money, swords, axes, shields etc. These are merely ordinary ones, not those you are questing for. And you can start fights only too easily.

All this activity is clearly visible in the remarkable graphics. Well drawn and highly detailed backgrounds form the scene in which the animated characters move around. If you type in, 'drink the wine', you will see 'yourself' raise the flagon to 'your' lips. At times it can be like Piccadilly Circus on a weekend as characters arrive and exit by the bus load.

Moving from location to location is simply a question of entering the compass point direction and a WHERE command will always supply the visible exits if you have forgotten them. Moving around within a location is done by the use of 'l' and 'r'. In some locations there are celestial undergrounds. If you have managed to pick up a ring (ordinary type) you can use these ringways to get to another location. Although if you're drawing a map of Valhalla, this can be less than useful, since you don't know where you are when you get there.

GENERAL

Valhalla comes complete with very good instructions. Loading time is four minutes. Keyboard response is fast, and a useful function is that you can type in commands at any time. If an action of some sort is taking place the computer waits and then processes your command when ready.

CRITICISM

'Compared to any other adventure game I've seen, the graphics of *Valhalla* are fabulous. It seems incredible that they have managed to pack so much detail into 48K. The scenery has a real sense of depth.'

'Considering how much detail there already is in the backgrounds, I'm astonished that the animation of the characters is as detailed as it is. I think my favourite is the Raven, who flaps his way in and lands occasionally.'

'My basic disappointment with *Valhalla* stems from its coldness. Despite all the things "you" can do, the life of the place seems to go on without you. Apart from dying of starvation I found I could stand still for ages and no one bothered with me. There's a touch of a travelogue about it all — just walking about seeing things and eating loads of food. I think it might have had a better impact if there was more danger immediately.'

'A lot of program, no doubt about it, but much less excitement than I thought there would be. Still, if you like adventure games, this one is going to keep you occupied for hours and hours.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard play: excellent
Use of colour: subtle and complex, excellent
Graphics: excellent
Sound: average
General rating: an excellent program all round, which has gone further with graphics than any adventure game yet, but with reservations about the ultimate appeal of the quest, and an expensive game to buy.

Use of computer	94%
Graphics	95%
Playability:	90%
Getting started:	95%
Addictive qualities:	60%
Value for money:	55%
Overall:	81½%

Groucho

Producer: **Automata**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£10.00**
Language: **basic as hell but fun**
Author: **The PiMan and others**

'The game you are about to play is our salute to Hollywood, that dream factory where everything was possible and where Groucho worked to make the world laugh,' says the blurb on the excellent cassette inlay. To make your dreams come true the certified lunatics at **Automata** have produced another mystery adventure game with a worthy prize for the winner. Judging by the difficulty in giving away the prize for uncovering the secret of *Pimania*, the secret in *Groucho* must be easier to find since you have to complete a slogan in not more than ten words that is dafter than 'We put some ting in computing!' This implies they expect more correct answers by the 1 June when the competition closes.

Somewhere in the depths of *My name is Uncle Groucho you win a fat cigar*, the name of a Hollywood star is hidden. Should you be lucky enough to guess it correctly and be dafter than anyone at **Automata** then your prize will be a trip for two to meet the Hollywood star in person, flying Concorde to JFK, and then on to Los Angeles, staying at the famous Waldorf Astoria

in New York, cruising home aboard the QE II, and £500 spending money.

TO WIN

This is all you do. Risk your sanity in Groucho and the PiMan's America, where the currency is fat cigars, travel is by space shuttle and covered wagon and conversation is by way of Groucho Marxist jokes made worse by interruptions from the PiMan. Needless to say, in the time allowed none of our reviewers got very far. Fortunately none of them was silly enough to fall for the opening question, Pimaniancs one and all ...

GENERAL

The program is slow to respond to input commands but Automata seem to have become a law unto themselves in this respect, and no doubt addicts will suffer very little from this drawback. As usual the program offers little in the way of help to get into the game and no hints on playing — Groucho, after all, was not noted for his kindness towards idiots.

CRITICISM

'I find it impossible to rate accurately a game which is designed to be a cult, and one which takes so long to probe that you can't see enough of it to be fair. As far as I got, which wasn't very far, it appeared to be as satisfyingly obscure as *PiMania* and pretty wierd too.'

'The graphics are, if anything, better than in **PiMania.** *The opening street scene with an animated Groucho lurching up and down is very good. The refusal of an input is also fun, as the program has obviously been stocked with typical responses. I wonder, though, how much you need to know about the Marx Brothers and their films to get anywhere.'*

'I don't know who Groucho is, and I've never seen any of these films mentioned on the inlay card. I'm afraid I didn't enjoy **PiMania** either. I suppose Automata will say I'm just an alien-zapping arcade moron, but then I think they're a bunch of left over hippies. But my dad enjoyed the cigar that was stuck to the review cassette — thanks.'

'There's not a lot you can say about this game - either you'll love it, or hate it. Technically, the graphics are very good and fun, the response times are slow, and getting anywhere is difficult, which is as it should be. Fun anyway.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard play: slowish
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: very good
Sound: generally good, though a bit repetitious
General rating: hard to define, everyone seemed unsure of an exact definition beyond, 'if you liked *PiMania*, you'll like this.'

Use of computer:	70%
Graphics:	75%
Playability:	65%
Getting started:	65%
Addictive qualities	59%
Value for money:	65%
Overall:	66½%

Light yur fat cigar and stalk the streets of America with Uncle Groucho.





My Kingdom for a Harley! The riderless bikes await.

Rider

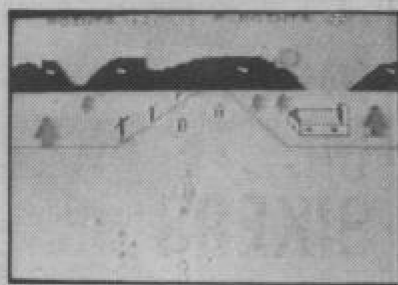
Producer: **Virgin Games**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **basic with some machine code**
Author: **Roy Poole & Terry Murray**

The authors of Virgin's *Yomp* have again come up with a quasi-military theme. The object of this two-part game is to parachute into enemy territory (you're an agent from M15) and land on a motorbike, then escape on the bike, checking out the enemy's mined roads. You do this by weaving in and out of the mines which fortunately still have their markers on so you can see where they are.

A sensible menu appears, towed on behind a plane which lets you choose between one and five players, and skill levels ranging from 001 to the coveted 007! The game commences with the plane roaring across the screen and you falling out. It then cuts to a second screen where you are seen floating erratically down under your parachute. Along the base riderless motor bikes slowly pass by. These have been provided by the Resistance, although how they get so many riderless bikes to move along and without the enemy seeing them is not explained! The idea is to land neatly on one of the bikes.

This isn't as easy to do as it sounds. At the last moment, just when you think you've got yourself lined up, the harness is released and you drop. If you miss a bike it's back to the top.

The second part starts immediately you land on one. Here you get a head on view as the bike with 'you' on it races down the heavily-mined road. You can swerve left and right, accelerate or brake. If you hit a mine, that's it. On the higher level of difficulty the speeds increase and more of the mines are live. Although the patterns of mines remain much the same from game to game, the mines which are active are never the same.



Screen 2 — dodging the marked mines. RIDER.

CRITICISM

'Both sections contain large graphics, although I'm sure a much better job could have been done with the clouds which resemble those you used to get in old Atari combat games. Landing on a bike is less a question of skill than luck and only having one life is extremely irritating as you have to go back through the menu again.'

'Although the rider veers across the road, nicely, banking on the turns and so on, it seems silly having a brake and accelerate key which can't be used while you're pressing left or right. In the end this isn't very playable and I can't see anyone coming back to it after the first time.'

'The graphics are reasonably drawn but overall the colours aren't pleasing. There's quite a lot of jerkiness to the movement, and despite all those bytes on the loading one wonders

why they had to put a self-destruct in the program if you try to break in. Would we see more **BASIC** than code?'

COMMENTS

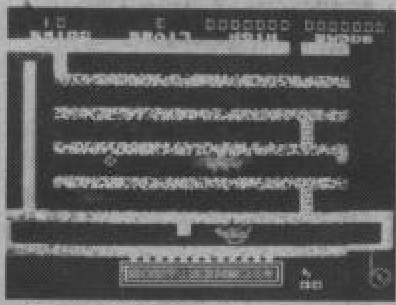
Keyboard positions: reasonable
Joystick options: none
Keyboard play: responsive but you can't brake or accelerate while veering left or right
Use of colour: average
Graphics: average
Sound: continuous but unadventurous
Skill levels: seven
Lives: one
General rating: fair, could have been better

Use of computer:	**45%**
Graphics:	**55%**
Playability	**50%**
Getting started:	**60%**
Addictive qualities:	**45%**
Value for money:	**45%**
Overall:	**50%**

MORRIS MEETS THE BIKERS

Producer: **Automata**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.00**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **S Curtis**

Automata aren't exactly noted for bringing out many arcade games, preferring their obscurantist misadventures like *Pimania* and *Groucho*. So it's really thrilling to get a zappo game from them — mind you, you can't get away from the PiMan that easily because he's the owner of Morris of the title. And as an added bonus, in answer to those record companies who keep boring us with their computer programs on the flip sides of hit records, Automata gives you, absolutely free, a tasteful rendition of *Leader of the Pac* by the incredible **Lady Sinclive and the PiMen.** If you're into biker songs and butchery then you'll love this hit single (say no more!)



MORRIS MEETS THE BIKERS in the largest N.C.P. in the world.

Morris has been abandoned in a multi-storey car park and he's desperate to get out (he gets claustrophobia). Your task as Morris is to drive around the car park collecting coins (you need ten) to feed into the slot on the closed barrier. Unfortunately the Phaantom, Phreaky, Phearsome kamikaze bikers from the planet of Morris Minor are loose in the car park and running into them causes severe loss of life (yours, of course). Additional hazards are walls, tyre clamps, carbon monoxide fumes, tin tacks and huge parking fees. All this drama is played out against a background of falling fuel supply and the hard concrete of an uncaring carpark. The only way between multi-story levels is to use the rather unreliable lifts at either side.

Should you be clever enough to collect sufficient coins you may leave the car park by the exit at the bottom right of screen which promptly dumps you in another car park. There are nine in all. You do have one weapon at least — a magic horn which zaps the bikers.

'Good packaging with clear and concise instructions leads you into this unique and very playable game. The hazards are everywhere, from tin tacks to fumes which knock you out for five to ten seconds. The lifts looked as though they had seen better days! *Morris* has a nice use of colour with good, detailed graphics, although there wasn't much use of sound, just the horn tooting and end of scren bleeping. Each screen is harder than the last.'

***Automata** are trying to cash in on their much talked about* **Pimania** *by putting the PiMan into a Moggy (Morris Minor car). The graphics are good and the game is fast moving. Control keys are user-defined, which is always useful. The* **Leader of the Pac** *single on the other side is rather odd to say the least – even distasteful.'*

'Lurching over the tin tacks, suffocating with car fumes, avoiding mad bikers from a bygone age and paying exorbitant parking fees, it almost sounds like real life! However, I think losing a life for illegal exits from a car park is a bit tough! Great graphics with a nice chunky look to them. This is definitely an original game and it can all be enjoyed with the volume full up on your cassette player as *Leader of the Pac* blares out!'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: user-defined five keys
Joystick options: Kempston, although AGF and Protek with user-defined keys possible
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: average
Graphics: good
Sound: good
Skill levels: gets harder with each screen
Screens: nine
Lives: four
General rating: good

Use of computer:	**80%**
Graphics:	**75%**
Playability:	**80%**
Getting started:	**70%**
Addictive qualities:	**65%**
Value for money:	**75%**
Overall:	**74%**

LUNA CRABS

Producer: **Micromega**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Meryn Escourt**

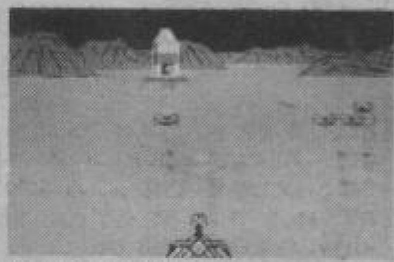
You're a part of the Solar System Resources Research team down on one of the Saturnian moons, taking samples and away from your craft, when suddenly you find yourself surrounded by nasty red crabs which spit green acid gob at you.

Fortunatley you have your guided missile cannon to try and keep them at bay, but they're all around. This is a 3D game which shows you the view of the mountainous planet's surface with the cannon in the foreground. As in such games as *3D Tanx*, a hit from the green goo on the gun turret means a loss of a life.

CRITICISM

'The graphics are relatively simple, although the crabs scutter about very realistically, and the cannon fire fades away into perspective nicely. Although this is very playable, it tends to pall quite quickly — and you can't get back to the ship sitting so tantalisingly a short distance away.'

'I would expect a little more for the price, especially



Dressed LUNA CRABS are on tonight's menu.

as it loses its appeal and becomes repetitive.'

'The crabs move about very well, and are as cowardly as one would expect. Shooting them isn't a simple task as the "guided" missiles are only so by virtue of the fact that they follow the swinging path of the turret. If you keep swinging about, sea sickness soon sets in. In the end, not very addictive.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: good, 1/zero left/right rotation and guide missiles, 9 to fire
Joystick options: none
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: good
Sound: average
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
General rating: playable, but not very addictive

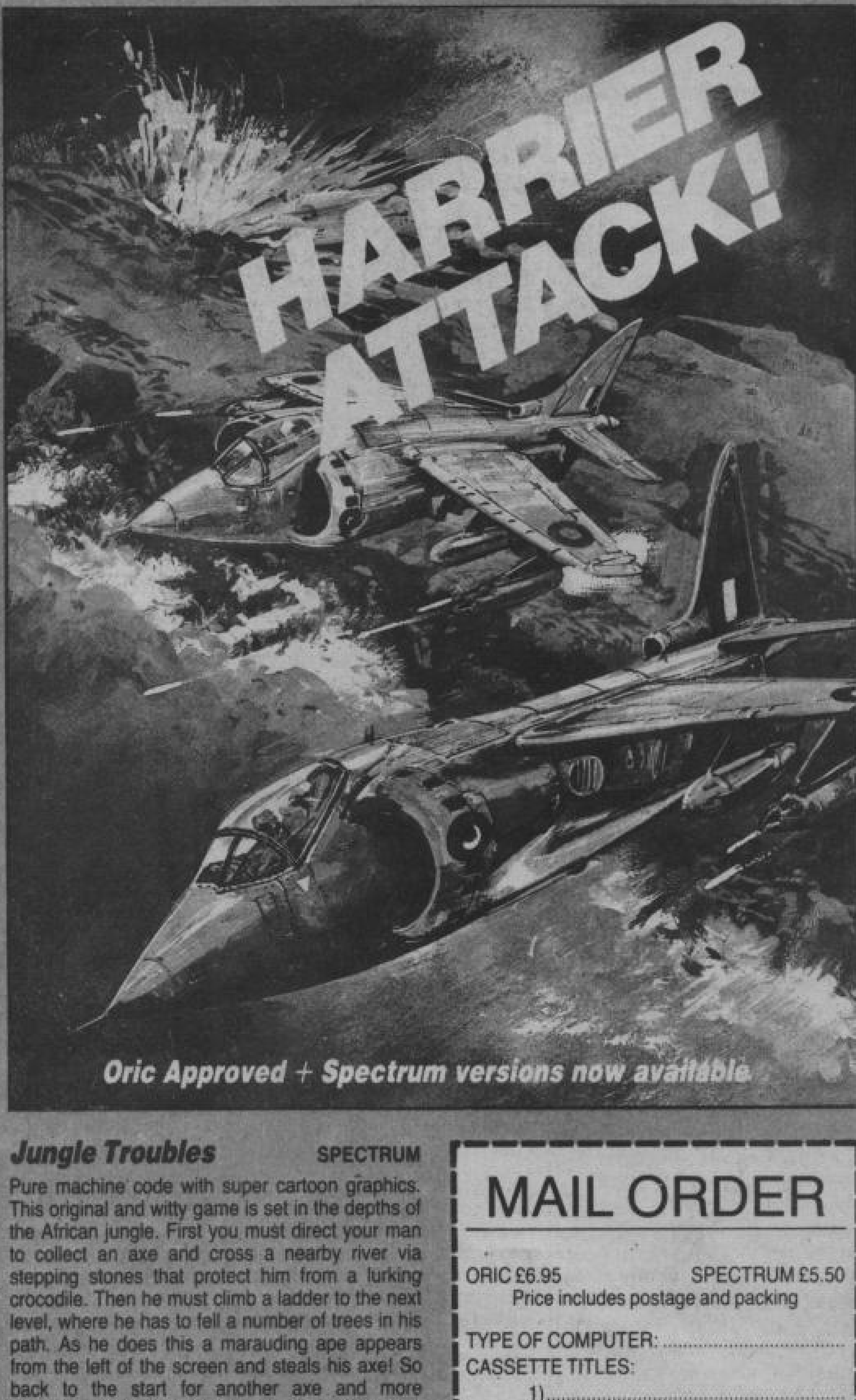
Use of computer	**70%**
Graphics	**72%**
Playability	**68%**
Getting started	**65%**
Addictive qualities	**40%**
Value for money	**55%**
Overall	**61½%**

Reviews continue on 73

ORIC · SPECTRUM · ORIC · SPECTRUM · ORIC · SPECTRUM · ORIC · SPECTRUM · ORIC · SPECTRUM · ORIC

Durell Software

Dept. CM1 Durell Software
Castle Lodge · Castle Green
Taunton · TA4 1AB
ENGLAND



Harrier Attack — ORIC-1 and SPECTRUM

Pure machine-code, super-fast, action-packed, highly addictive arcade-style game requiring great skill. The harrier takes-off from an aircraft-carrier and flies over seaborne defences to attack enemy installations on a nearby island. The harrier may fly faster, slower, higher or lower, and has bombs and rocket fire with which to protect itself and make its own attack. If it flies too high it is detected by enemy jet-fighters (which it may counter-attack) – so it needs to hug the mountainous terrain which also varies with every new game. But the island is heavily defended by anti-aircraft rockets and tanks, which again the harrier may counter-attack or try to fly through. A tally is kept of fuel, bombs and rockets, plus player score and high score. Finally the harrier must make its bomb-run over the enemy base before returning to its own carrier.

ORIC APPROVED VERSION £6.95
SPECTRUM VERSION £5.50

Starfighter — ORIC-1 (48K only)

You are in command of a galactic defence vessel travelling through inter-stellar space to attack and destroy intruding aliens. At long range this is carried-out on your computer scanner which displays stars in the local quadrant, with passing planets, space stations, star-gates, and of course the aliens which may strike in packs or singly, scattering anti-matter mines around your ship. You may counter-attack the aliens with your photon torpedoes, or if you move-in close enough switch over to manual and visual control to chase the fleeing alien and blast him with your phasors. See the star-scape spin relative to your ship's manoeuvres, but watch-out for the alien mines whizzing past. You will need to conserve energy carefully to get back to the refuelling points, and then the time-gates to the other quadrants. Weapons, shield and energy status are all monitored throughout this pure machine code game, which may be set to tenlevels of skill.

ORIC APPROVED VERSION £6.95

GALAXY 5 — ORIC-1

Side one of Galaxy 5 contains three pure machine code arcade type space games. They consist of 'Galaxy' which is a Galaxian-type game with 15 winged aliens swooping down to bomb a left/right controlled rocket launcher in groups of one, two or three. Next 'Astro War' is an asteroids-type game with a meteor shower moving sideways across the screen towards your ship which has right,left,up and down controls plus phasor fire to blast the meteors along with any aliens that may be hiding amongst them. The last game on this side is 'Space Chase' which gives a view from your cockpit of a fleeing alien. You fire at him and he fires back, so you must get a direct hit quickly before he destroys your force shields. Side two of this tape consists of two more arcade type space games but this time in BASIC, which are easy to learn from, being short, simple and clearly written with every line of the BASIC explained in an English REMark statement.

ORIC VERSION £6.95

Assembler/Disassembler — ORIC-1

The assembler follows standard 6502 conventions and has proved very reliable while in continual use by Durell Software. Features include the following:

Generally	*List File*	*Pseudo-Ops*
Auto line numbering	LIST	EQUATE
Six character labels	DELETE	BYTE
Updatable list-file	LLIST	DBYTE
Maths on operands	ALTER	WORD
Syntax checking	INSERT	TEXT
Output to printer	END/STOP	BLOCK

ORIC VERSION £6.95

Jungle Troubles — SPECTRUM

Pure machine code with super cartoon graphics. This original and witty game is set in the depths of the African jungle. First you must direct your man to collect an axe and cross a nearby river via stepping stones that protect him from a lurking crocodile. Then he must climb a ladder to the next level, where he has to fell a number of trees in his path. As he does this a marauding ape appears from the left of the screen and steals his axe! So back to the start for another axe and more problems with the crocodile! And the ape! Having hacked a path through the forest he may climb another ladder to level three where he has to leap a pit of flames by grabbing a swinging rope. Will he ever escape back to the city? Can he jump the chasm that suddenly opens before him just as he is about to reach home? A highly amusing game with delightful graphics suited to all members of the family – but very frustrating and addictive.

SPECTRUM VERSION £5.50

MAIL ORDER

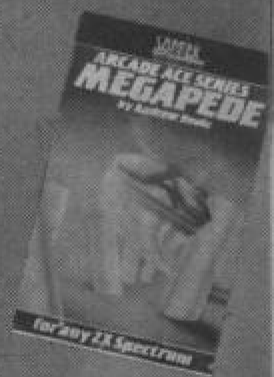
ORIC £6.95 SPECTRUM £5.50
Price includes postage and packing

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1) ....
2) ....
3) ....
Name: ....
Address: ....
....
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....

Overseas customers please allow £1.00 extra

LIVING GUIDE
TO SPECTRUM SOFTWARE







CRASH GAME OF THE MONTH

Welcome to the **CRASH Living Guide**! In the next few pages you will find an amazing amount of games software reviewed in brief, and every month the section will be getting bigger as the current month's new games are added to it. We've tried to be as comprehensive as possible in the time allowed, but anything we've missed out, you tell us about it and we'll include it in the following issue.

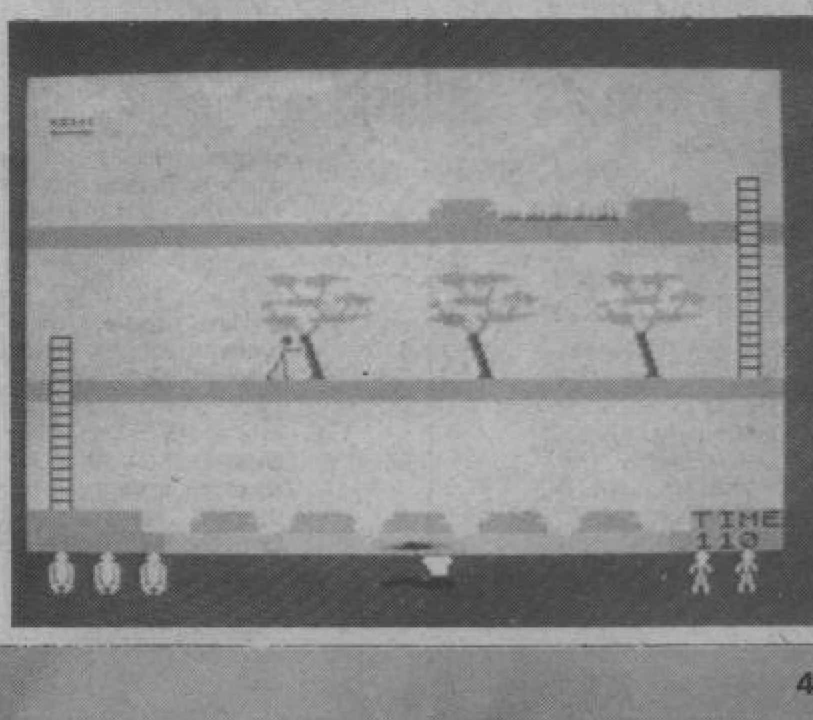
Each month we shall be taking a few of the older games and looking at them in more detail. The one on this page will be our **Game of the Month.** To get here, it's going to have to be good! This month the accolade goes to **Jungle Trouble!** by Durrell/Martech, our reviewer is **Matthew Uffindell.**

Jungle Trouble is one of those games where you are told in advance everything that will happen to you, how to go about certain tasks, and where you can see all of the sections on one screen. To get away with that the game must be good — and it is!

At the beginning you are asked what playing speed you want. **1** being fast and **4** being slow (well, slower anyway). When you see the screen set up you may think it all looks easy (like I did). Just wait till the game starts! Three monkeys scamper on from the left and settle down on the right, at the bottom. Then three men come on after them and stand around at the left. A nice touch is that one realises he's in the wrong place and goes back, to reappear within the frame of the playing area. All this is very nicely animated. A clock below the man starts and the game is under way.

Firstly you must use the stepping stones to jump across a river. As you back up to the left of the screen for your run up you collect an axe, which is signified at the base of screen. A jaw-snapping crocodile lives in the river, so falling in means instant death. For jumping the river, judgement and timing are critical — a slight slip of the finger and the all important jump timing is lost. You fall head over heels in to the water and into the croc's jaws. But it you're quick you can run back to the bank. Falling in loses the axe! Get another.

The monkeys are itching for a go. One tree down, three to go...



Once across the river you climb ladders to the second level where you are faced with four trees which must be chopped down with your axe. It takes several blows before the tree shakes and you step sharply out of the way to avoid being crushed by the falling tree. It's also at this point that the bored monkeys come into their own. If you watch you'll see one get up and disappear off the screen to reappear on your level. He'll steal your axe, although if it's still sharp enough you can kill him with it. If it's very blunt he may kill you. Once stolen it means going back for another. Over the river, jump, jump, jump!

After clearing away all the trees and using several axes to do it, another set of ladders takes you to the third level. Here you must jump up at the right moment to catch hold of a swaying rope and swing across a fiery pit. Getting to the other side safely triggers a chasm to open up, which has to be jumped. Then you're home — I haven't managed that yet!

Throughout, the graphics are fantastic and there's good use of colour and sound. Nice details like the monkey that scratches his head if no one's on the second stage. Generally a very addictive and worthwhile game.

This is the heart of the magazine! A perpetually updated guide to Spectrum software. It is intended as a brief but comprehensive listing for ready reference and not as a detailed criticism of the games (although we will always reflect the original reviewers' comments in the eintry). As the issues progress, you will always be able to find the detailed review of newer games by looking at the game title — the bracketed figure next to it will indicate the issue of *CRASH* in which the detailed review is to be found. Obviously that will not be the case in this first issue.

The mammoth task of ensuring that every program for the Spectrum gets reviewed in brief for this section still goes on as we go to press, so certainly for the next two or three issues *The Living Guide* won't be thoroughly complete.

Programs are listed under convenient headings (a list of the headings is given below). As more and more games come onto the market, software producers are inclined to move away from the old arcade copies we have become used to, and this naturally makes the task of slotting the games into a convenient category harder. On the other hand, it means we are getting better and more interesting games to play.

Under each heading, programs are listed alphabetically by title, we then show the software producer's name, memory required to run the program, its recommended retail price and, where known, the author of the program.

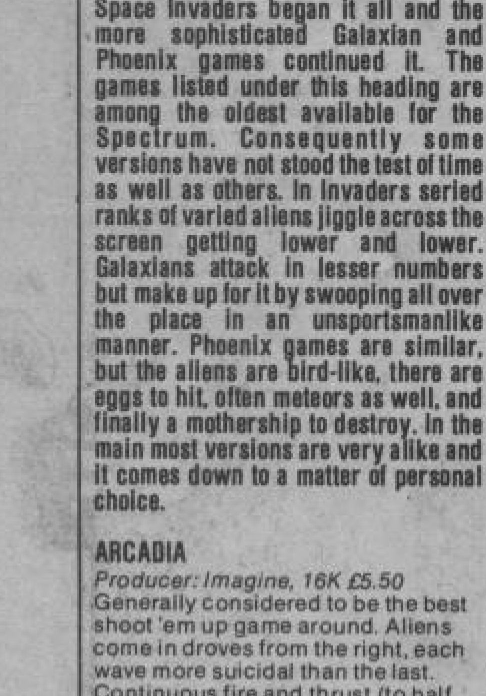
Reviews show as often as possible what joysticks may be used with a program. Programs that have the cursor keys and 0 for fire may be used with either a *Protek* interface or the *AGF II* and this is usually indicated in the entry. Where it states that there is no joystick option, this means none is provided — by the producer. Naturally, if you own a programmable joystick controller like the *AGF* or *Stonechip*, you will still be able to use this. In the entry it usually states that such and such joystick may be used — this is a convenient shortening, since we obviously mean that such and such interface may be used to control your joystick (which may be of any make).



INVADER/ GALAXIAN/ PHOENIX

Space Invaders began it all and the more sophisticated Galaxian and Phoenix games continued it. The games listed under this heading are among the oldest available for the Spectrum. Consequently some versions have not stood the test of time as well as others. In Invaders seried ranks of varied aliens jiggle across the screen getting lower and lower. Galaxians attack in lesser numbers but make up for it by swooping all over the place in an unsportsmanlike manner. Phoenix games are similar, but the aliens are bird-like, there are eggs to hit, often meteors as well, and finally a mothership to destroy. In the main most versions are very alike and it comes down to a matter of personal choice.

ARCADIA
Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Generally considered to be the best shoot 'em up game around. Aliens come in droves from the right, each wave more suicidal than the last. Continuous fire and thrust (to half the screen height only) with good keyboard positions. Excellent hi-res smooth graphics. Joystick: Kempston (and softlink II) or Fuller. Addictive and difficult to master.



LIST OF HEADINGS

Arcade:

Invader/Galaxian/Phoenix
Asteroids and Space Games
Scramble/Defender/Missile Defence
Cockpit Games
Maze Games
Ghost Gobbling
Platform Games
Creepie-crawlies
Froggers
Grid Games
Painters
Trekkies
Miscellaneous

ASTRO BLASTER
Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
Author: John Edwards
Quicksilva's go at galaxian/phoenix is creditably fast and difficult to master, featuring five attack waves in three phases — Cybird, Meteor and Plasma, each of which have their own characteristics. Oddly enough the first wave is the most difficult. You're given five shields. Graphics and sound are neat. Joystick: Kempston.

COSMIC GUERILLA
Producer: Crystal, 16K £5.50
This game is a copy of an arcade shoot 'em up and almost makes a category of its own. Aliens stand in several vertical columns on either side of the screen. The centre block is a stack of humans and your three space ships (and lives). Your ship is at the base, firing up. Aliens zip across to the centre, grab a human and abduct him to the side. Eventually they can get at the three ships and steal those. For each one they get to the side you lose a life. Too rapid fire shortens the range so it's better to be accurate than fast. Features fast motherships that zip along the base just above your head and fire at you, rapid mutants and six difficulty levels. Joystick: Kempston. Recommended.

FIREBIRDS
Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Graeme Devine
A classic phoenix. Fire rate and left/right movement are the best we've seen. Beautiful graphics featuring red Firebirds, blue Bombers, and white Weavers in an intricate dance of death. 100 percent machine code. Very difficult to get to see the mothership, but worth it! Highly recommended.

GALACTIC ABDUCTORS
Producer: Anirog, 16K £5.95
This version features large animated graphics. The aliens weave fanciful patterns when attacking and have the cute habit of eating your population when you're not looking, only throwing back their skulls. 100 percent machine code. Hi-score. Joystick option.

GALACTIC TROOPER
Producer: Romik, 16K £5.99
Author: Ian Morrison
Halfway between an invader and galaxian type, this three skill level game offers reasonably attractive graphics and plenty of them. You're at the base firing up at ten bomb racks containing five aliens per rack. Above them a mothership floats lazily from left to right and back again. To hit it you must blast out all five aliens from a rack so you can fire through the gap. Aliens reproduce fast! For more points there are a few saucers that venture out, but they're easy to hit. The aliens drop bombs on you but the screen is so full that the dropping distance is small and they are hard to dodge. Skill doesn't appear to be a factor, rather luck. Hi-score. Joystick: Kempston or Sinclair, machine code, only average value for money.

GALAKZIONS
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
One of the weaker games with three skill levels and attackers more resembling invader aliens than anything else. The rate of continuous fire is wrong for the slow attack patterns, robbing the game of any excitement. Works with Mikrogen II joystick. Machine code. One or two player games.

GALAXIANS
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
A good copy and a classic version with nine levels of play, hi-score, personalised scoring, one or two playere games. Features swooping Galaxians and hi-res explosions. Joystick: Kempston. Machine code. Very good value for money.

INVADERS
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Although this is a standard and close copy of the original, the hi-res graphics stand up quite well to the test of time. Nine levels of play and four variations of alien.

INVASION FORCE
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Artic's engaging and addictive phoenix game has the mothership protected by a force field hovering above your base. Should your missiles hit it they are returned back as three! The mothership is only vulnerable in its control centre. There are loads of bomb-dropping aliens flapping around. Three lives, two skill levels and harder screens. Neat touch — if your base is hit the Artic lorry rushes out to repair it between lives. Generally recommended.

HEADBANGER
Producer: Llamasoft, 48K £4.95
Llamasoft is one of those companies that got famous fast, though looking at this game one wonders why. The sky is raining hammers (makes a change from ravening aliens I suppose) and Chico must carry bags of money from one side of the screen to the other under the partial shelter of four blocks which are being eroded by the falling hammers. In between the shelters Chico can nut the hammers for points, but after ten he gets a headache and must then nut a red aspirin hammer. Hammers hitting his body instead of his head lose a life. Getting a money bag across safely restores one shelter. Badly put together and rather pointless.

KAMIKAZE
Producer: A&F, 16K £5.75
Basically a galaxian game. Pit your wits against wave after wave of suicidal fighter aircraft which swoop down on you dropping bombs. Clear two screens and you get a bonus screen against easy-to-hit helicopters before returning to the main feature. Graphics are attractive if a bit flickery and the mushroom shaped explosions are good. Continuous sound of attacking aircraft unless you drown them out with the sound of your continuous fire. Hall of fame, no joystick option.

SPACE INTRUDERS
Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
A close copy of Invaders with rather small graphics that work in character blocks. Fast but out of date.

SPACE RAIDERS
Producer: Psion, 16K £4.95
Another close Invaders copy with better graphics than Space

intruders, but slower and not particularly addictive to play.

SPACE ZOMBIES
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
One critic thought this was pathetic, another liked it. Certainly a 'quaint' game. You're at the screen base firing up at a bunch of highly coloured alien zombies which chug about the screen like a train, getting longer with each screen. The graphics are big, there's continuous fire, a nice moving star background, and the main feature is the erratic and highly unpredictable movement of the aliens. Three speeds, one or two player games, plenty of levels (at least six before I got killed off). Joystick: Mikrogen II, good value but not terribly addictive.

TERROR DAKTIL 3D
Producer: Melbourne House, 48K £6.95
Not, you might think by the title, a galaxian/invader type game, but it is really. There's a 3D landscape and 2D massed Daktils in the distance



moving jsut like space invaders. To hit them you must get the dimensional trajectory of your 'battered' cannon correct. Frequently one will swoop down on you in very good animated line drawing. You get more points for hitting the swooping ones, but it's safer to dodge them. Not up to Melbourne House's usual standard and the sound — what happened to it?

THE DETECTIVE
Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50
Another game which sounds unlikely as a galaxian type contender, but then, we couldn't quite figure what the title had to do with the game. But it is a good game anyway. Nice packaging as usual from Arcade and reflected in the graphics. Avoid the falling objects which change characteristic by level or shoot them for points. Tyres (?!) form up like thunderclouds and fall on you, a wretched dog keeps stealing your points. Avoid him by using the wrap-around screen. 25 levels. Joystick: Kempston and AGF or Protek. Good value.

WINGED AVENGER
Producer: Workforce, 16K £5.00
Something of a cult among galaxian fans, with two options (2-part load) for the 'brave' and 'also-rans'. Six skill levels, laser, forcefield barrier and simple but effective graphics. This is a fast game for the experts — novices might not even realise they've lost all their lives. Disappointing graphics and ultimately not of lasting appeal.

ASTEROIDS/SPACE

With some exceptions, Asteroid type games tend to be less colourful than most arcade programs – some are virtually black and white, but the category is still one of the most popular. Also included under this heading are 'space' games which have very little to do with asteroids.

CONFUSION
Producer: Blaby, 48K £4.95
There's something of a 'frogger' feel to this ultra-fast game. Alien ships zip along parallel tracks which you must traverse, shooting them for points. Impossible without a joystick and difficult with, goes with Kempston or AGF or Protek. Generally less than one expects from the usually excellent Blaby people.

BLACK HOLE
Producer: Fantasy, 16K £5.50
Centre screen is the Black Hole, from which emerge three types of alien craft. Two of your weapons are deflected by the force of the Black Hole, which makes aiming difficult, and the third weapon has a limited range. Indiscriminate shooting leads to loss of power, and the aliens fire back. To make matters worse there is space debris to avoid on the left of screen, the area to which you're confined. Control in eight directions, but too many keys make this game hard to enjoy, and there are too many for a joystick to handle.

COSMIC DEBRIS
Producer: Artic, 48K £4.95
An archetypal 'asteroids' game with hardly any colour at all. Hollow outlines for the asteroids which shatter into smaller fragments when hit. Rotate, thrust and hyperspace and typically nasty flying saucers that appear when you don't need them. Two speeds (fast and suicidal — and they mean it!) with bonus ships for points. A game this fast should have continuous fire facility, but doesn't. No popular joystick facility. Good value for asteroid addicts who like a fast game.

DEEP SPACE
Producer: PSS, 48K £5.95
A standard version of asteroids with rotate left and right, thrust, hyperspace and fire, wrap around screen and alien ships. Can't comment on the game's quality since none of our three review copies would load.

JETPAC
Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
There's not much can be said about Ultimate that hasn't already been said. Graphics and presentation are of the highest standard. In Jetpac you must get your spaceman to assemble a rocket and fuel it, steal as many gems as you can and avoid the irate aliens or kill them with the laser. When assembled the rocket takes off for another planet to plunder. Re-assemble the ship after five planets. Five levels of different aliens. Joystick: Kemptston. One or Two player games, continuous fire and movement in eight directions. Highly recommended.

KOSMIC PIRATE
Producer: Blaby, 48K £4.95
There's a factory below on the planet which you must plunder, guiding your ship through the heavy alien space traffic. deceptively simply looking game with good graphics and sound and really a 'frogger' variant. M/C. Joystick: Kempston.

METEROIDS
DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
In a way it's as well this game is in the cheaper bracket because it isn't a very good program. The graphics are jerky in movement and the relative speed of craft to asteroids is too slow. Worst of all you can only use one function at a time so you can't fire while rotating or thrusting. There is a useful 'redefine' function which allows you to change keyboard options and alter the way in which the game plays. No joystick facility, unless redefined to cursor keys to use AGF or Protek.

METEOR STORM
Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
Mercifully, Quicksilva have proved their originality in the games field by going onto games which make this one look as silly as it is. If you like asteroid games then this is pretty fast. Simple outlines hover in a blank black space. Ship orientation is in eight directions using all the number keys which means you can't concentrate on the game.

PLANETOIDS
Producer: Psion, 16K £4.95
A very good copy and a classic version with the best graphics of the lot. Nice bright yellow asteroids which shatter satisfyingly. A bit slow, although the shattered fragments change direction and move faster. Alien ships are well defined graphically. Using Z/X for rotation and SPACE/ENTER for fire/thrust is quite good, but H for hyperspace takes some getting to in an emergency. No skill levels, which means the addictivity rating is low, but good value at the price. No joystick option.

SCHIZOIDS
Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Imagine come up with some of the best games — this isn't one of them. You're supposed to clear the space lanes of civilisation's debris by bulldozing it into a black hole in the centre of the screen. The graphics are black and white, though nicely drawn but the game is confusing. Joystick: Fuller.

SENTINEL
Producer: Abacus, 16K £5.00
Prevent the enemy from attacking the five Sentinel space stations with your four ships. Careful though — your three remaining ships (lives) are docked with the station so if your protective screen isn't effective you can lose lives before you've even had a chance to use them! Enemy comes in various forms and meteroids make life impossible at times. Your weapons are laser and a guided missile so you have to contend with left/right rotation, thrust, laser fire, missile fire and two controls for guiding it, which makes Sentinel a game for the four-handed player! Oh, and there's a force field for the station — five-handed player! A good fast and furious game. Good value. No joystick option.

SHUTTLE
Producer: Blaby, 48K £4.95
Take your shuttle craft from the mothership and descend to two specially created landing spaces on the planet's hilly surface to rescue the stranded astronauts, which stand on the hillsides waving their arms frantically. You can only take one at a time and landing results in the nearest dashing to your craft and partial safety. Unfortunately the sky is crowded with bi-directional meteors. The graphics are cute and the sound very good, but theinlay card suggests you can fire at something when you can't. Avoiding the meteors is simply done by dodging them (a sort of frogger). Not the most addictive of Blaby's games, but still very playable. Joystick: Kempston, AGF or Protek.

SPECTROID STORM
Producer: Abersoft, 48K £4.95
A very new asteroid game and one of the most colourful with a pretty packed screen. Wrap around action and multi-shaped objects. Good acceleration and braking but requires a tender touch as the action is quite violent. Hyperspace, no difficulty levels. It looks good but it needs more playability to put it in the top rank. Joystick: Kempston, AGF or Protek.

VIOLENT UNIVERSE
Producer: Fantasy, 16K £5.50
This game has an essential difference — instead of firing ahead, you lay gas clouds behind you to destroy the aliens. The aliens are made of anti-matter, so as they rush headling into your vapour clouds they're anihilated. You must score 1000 points within 40 seconds to get to the next level, an idea which makes this game extremely addictive to play. Wrap around screen, 8-directional movement in a very crowded screen. Hiding inside one of your vapour clouds is a sneaky way of avoiding death. Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, Fuller or Mikrogen II. Good value.



SCRAMBLE/ DEFENDER/ MISSILE DEFENCE

For many arcade enthusiasts defender and scramble games are the kings of flying, shoot 'em ups. They require quick reflexes and excellent hand/eye control. Of the home computer they demand programs with sensible control key layouts or joysticks for good results. In scramble games you fly a mission against a hidden enemy base, whereas as in defender games you must rescue humanity at the same time. In either case the game is played in profile, showing the topography of the ground over which you are flying. Missile defence is simpler, showing missile traces descending on your cities. You must guide the anti-missile defence by sighting cross hairs at the leading points of the enemy missile traces.

ARMAGEDDON
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
This version is a classic missile defence game with excellent graphics, especially the sunburst explosions. The missile traces split into several traces, coming thicker and faster with each wave. The available number of missiles in your armoury for each wave is shown at the base of the screen and above that are your six cities which you are protecting. After each attack wave the program updates your score and cities left. Nice title graphics and 'end' card. Recommended.

COSMIC RAIDERS
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
'One of the few times an arcade game has been improved upon,' said *Personal Computing Today*. That might be a bit exaggerated, but the graphics and control response are very good indeed. You must race across the planet and destroy the alien master ships in the lair. The cityscape beneath is densely populated and green grabbers keep abducting the humans. Knock out the aliens with smart bombs, but then you must catch the falling humans before they splat. Hosts of other alein fighters threaten you. Features long range scan, reverse. Long range shows the whole distance to travel. Keyboard positioning is sensible, which is as well, as this game does not have a joystick facility.

GROUND ATTACK
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
This is similar to 'Penetrator' by Melbourne House, but is nowhere as good a program. It's the sister game to 'Orbiter'. Here you must attack the aliens in their underground caverns. Weapons are bombs and laser and there are fuel dumps for points. Thrust and decelerate and nine skill levels (different speeds of play) with the cursor keys and 9 and 0 for direction and fire, which is not the best arrangement. No joystick facility. There are better value games around of this type.

HIDDEN CITY
Producer: Bytewell, 16K £5.95
Good, smooth graphics and three different frames make this a very playable game. No bombs here, only a laser and a quickly used up fuel supply. The first part makes you fly across a plain towards a vertical cliff. Enemy missiles attack from the floor and from the cliff. If you enter the cave at the base of the cliff the second frame scrolls across, presenting a maze containing fuel dumps. On surviving this there is a 'scramble' cavern with missiles and floating mines, and then the city to destroy. Six difficulty levels, invisible barriers and time warp. Joystick: Kempston.

ORBITER
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
This is a much better game than Silversoft's 'Ground Attack' and is a good version of the classic 'Defender' of arcade fame. The animated graphics are neat and the sound amusing. Control keys are much better placed than in GA as well. Climb, dive, thrust, reverse, hyperspace, smart bombs and laser all help you protect the humanoids from the marauding alien craft. Features an excellent long range scan. No joystick facility. M/C.

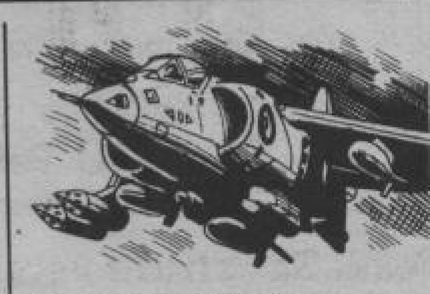
PENETRATOR
Producer: Melbourne House, 48K £6.95
Probably the definitive 'scramble' game for the Spectrum. Four rings of defence surround the alien base, each with its own problems of landscale. Missiles take off continuously guided by radar units (excellent animation) which get more accurate if you fail to destroy enough of them. Special feature allows you to reprogram the game to make your own landscape and alter the enemy's defences. Highly recommended. Joystick: Kempsoft I.

REPULSAR
Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Andrew Beale
This is Softek's version of missile defence and it is a close copy of the original. It's graphics are nowehre near as good as Ocean's 'Armageddon'. On the other hand it does have the extra feature of plenty of enemy planes buzzing around to destroy as well as the missiles themselves and the explosions are satisfactory. It is also faster to play than Ocean's version, but somehow less fun. One side of this tape is for the keyboard (with a dreadful layout) and the other side is for the Kempston joystick. The inlay card doesn't tell you that key M is for fire. Eight directional movement, generally okay, but not as playable as Armageddon.

ROCKET RAIDER
Producer: C-Tech, 16K £5.95
This is the poor man's 'Penetrator' and no mistake. The inlay blurb promises a long range scan — but nothing appears on it except the extremely limited landscape available to fly over. Fly is hardly the word — you only move if the thrust button is held down, and when you do that nothing else in the game moves except the lowering fuel gauge. Hitting the fuel tanks replenishes your tank and anyone can knock them off without difficulty because the missiles are easily avoided and the flying saucers don't do anything. There's no danger, no thrills and no skill needed. Keyboard positions are fine and the end of life explosion is the most imaginative graphic in the game. One or two players, poorly compiled machine code, no joystick option. The inlay card states that pressing key '2' gives you 'up' and 'reverse'. They mean 'Z' gives you reverse.

SCRAMBLE
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.50
This is an enjoyable copy of the arcade original and a flexible program as you're given a 4-option menu (1 = missiles, 2 = UFOs, 3 = Meteors, 4 = Fortress) which means you can leap from part to part as you choose, or fight your way through the correct sequence if you're a showoff. Three speeds with the graphics a bit shaky on fast. Usual lasers, bombs, fuel dumps, missiles with a neat 2-option on returning to the next life where you left off, or changing landscape each time. The meteors are too difficult to be enjoyable, and the sound isn't amazing. No joystick option and the keys are a bit of a handful (2 = down, 4 = up, 6 = brake, 7 = thrust, 0 = laser) and all lower row are bombs. All in all fun to play and good value.

HARRIER ATTACK
Producer: Martech/Durrell, 16K £6.95
This game seemed to upset a lot of magazine reviewers because of its unstated reference to the Falklands War! Bad taste perhaps? In any event, a completely daft reason to give an excellent game a poor review. You must take off from an aircraft carrier, dodge guided missiles fired at you from an enemy ship, then fly over a heavily defended island, bombing the anti-aircraft guns, avoiding the enemy fighters and shooting them down. Keep your speed up or you'll run out of fuel before reaching the climactic bombing run on the town (Port Stanley perhaps?) Then it's back to



the aircraft carrier to land. Fast responses and first rate graphics (the sun on the sea is particularly good). Five skill levels. Keys are cursor (pity) with zero to fire, nine to bomb and SPACE to eject. Joystick: Protek or AGF on the cursors. Highly recommended.

COCKPIT GAMES

There are now a number of programs which give you a forward view through the space ship's screen, enough to make a category of their own. We've decided to call these 'cockpit' games. This section does not include any of the 'Trek' games, which often have a viewscreen simulation, as they come under their own heading.

THE BLACK PLANET
Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £5.95
Author: B G Cornhill
A mammoth game for wet Sundays. You'll need a printer or a note pad or a good memory, for the complex of instructions are on one side and the game on the other. Your task is to rid the space lanes of pirates whose home is on the Black Planet, which is invisible until you find the Key, which has been broken into seven parts and distributed on seven different planets, which each have a different arcade adventure, which each has different key instructions, which means you've got to know it all backwards! That said, it's tons of fun. The cockpit view with moving stars is very good. An instrument panel tells you where you are in space, where the star base is or the planets on which you must land. Navigating is quite difficult, but if you get it right the sight of a planet looming up is very cimenatic. You can land manually or use the auto-docking feature. Between planets you may well be attacked by the pirates who know you are after them, in which case you are into a furious dog fight. It's not a game for a few moments. Excellent value and highly recommended.

COSMOS
Producer: Abbex, 16K £5.95
The keyboard layout looks simple but is confusing to play with. The view screen shows your convoy, which you must protect. Enemy ships infest space and so do asteroids. You have two lasers with continuous fire. Movement adjusts the field of view to quite an extent but without a long range scan it's difficult to anticipate properly. The colours are fine, sound rather poor, but nevertheless, a game with good playability. Joystick: Kemptson.

GALAXY ATTACK
Producer: Sunshine Books, 48K £5.95
This is a real zaparoony of a game with loads of playability, but be warned, you need to be an alien with three hands or a 15-digit Uruggian for keyboard control. The program comes in three parts; in space as you approach the Uruggian's planet, you must destroy their waves of fighters by centering the sight cross hairs; then on the planet's surface, where your landed ship is surrounded by walkers and fighters; and then the finale attack on the orbiting mother ship. Control response is good, colour and sound excellent, and the simple response is good, colour and sound excellent, and the simple 3-dimensional aliens work well. Recommended. No joystick.

TIMEGATE
Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
Excellent moving star backgrounds, in 3D give a real space feeling to this 5-skill level game. Long range scan shows you where the enemy are and you jump through space to the correct sector. Movement control is instant and keeping the enemy in your sights is a tough task helped by a joystick (Kempston). If you're successful at clearing the entire galaxy you can land on the aliens' planet to refuel before jumping the timegate to another infested galaxy. Full damage status readouts. Highly recommended.

3D SPAWN OF EVIL
Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
It's a bit of a cheat—to keep the program in 16K the very long-winded instructions are on one side of the cassette and the game on the other, which is irritating at first. The viewscreen works well with stars defining movement, but control is exceptionally sluggish and hitting the alien swarm is a bit like trying to kill ants with a pogo stick. In the end a slow and confusing game with no joystick option.

ZZOOM
Producer: Imagine, 48K £5.50
We waited long enough—probably the most famous and wanted non-available game, probably a clever ploy on Imagine's part. But it was worth the wait. Viewscreen shows you a road over which you are flying with little humans on the horizon whom you must save from the enemy bombers. These come in waves from the left, some just content to wipe out humanity, others which turn and fire at you, wearing down your shield. If you survive two waves without getting destroyed or crashing into the ground, there's a desert infested with tanks, and the sea with submarines and ... Scrolling graphics for the titles all help to make this a very memorable game and excellent value for money. Joystick: Fuller & Kempston.

Brrr! Deep in the confines of the frosty blue maze Pengy is pushing his way out of trouble. Pengy's frozen wasteland is a random maze constructed of blue ice blocks raided by the dreaded Sno-bees. The sno-bee's sting is deadly, but Pengy can retaliate by squashing them with the ice blocks that he pushes around. Pengy is based on one of this year's arcade successes, and this version captures all the action and addiction of the original. Packed full of features, super smooth graphics, flashing and bonus blocks, double score bonuses, dizzy bees, and hours of entertainment!

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NEW

PENGY

TUTANKHAMUN

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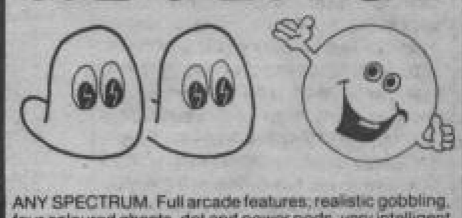
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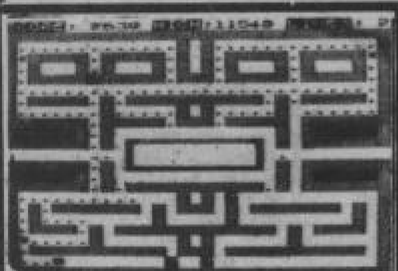
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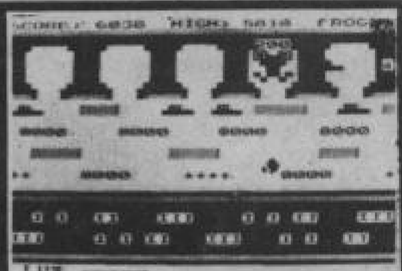
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MAZE GAMES

Maze games come in all shapes and sizes (this section excludes Pacman style games however). Some of those included here might not even seem to fit the category, but on reflection you will see that in fact they are really maze games (at least, you might if you try hard).

ANDROIDS
Producer: Sunshine Books, 48K £5.95
Androids boasts a vast maze populated with homicidal robots and is Sunshine's version of 'Frenzy/Panic'. Armed with a laser (fires in the direction you're pointing) and five lives, you must find the hidden exit to the next level. Special panel's replenish your force field and laser power. It's a 'no win' game for points. The graphics are good, nice animation and machine code makes for high speed movement. Good value for money and very playable.

ANDROID 1
Producer: Vortex, 16K £5.95
What we have here is a well thought out and addictive rape of the robots 'Frenzy/Berserk' game with five skill levels and copious screens. Android 1 is a superior robot and he has to blast his way through the walls of the complex towards, what? (A reactor actually, but who cares, it's the getting there that's fun). His enemies are several types of unattractive mutants (attractive graphics) including Groupies (in groups), Wanderers (luny lonies), Skaters (slithering around and hard to hit) and Bouncers who land on your head when you're least expecting it. Joystick: Kempston. Recommended.

CRAZY BALLOONS
Producer: A&F, 16K £5.75
A simple maze made up from crosses is only just big enough to let your waggling balloon through in places. Elsewhere you must use precision and timing to squeeze through without touching the sides. Extra points for using the narrowest passages. Perhaps too simplistic for most, but still not as easy as it first looks. There is a time limit.

DO DO
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Not at first sight a maze game, but this is one where you make your own maze for protection from the dreaded Snow Bees which infest the Arctic ice wastes where you, the last living Do Do, find yourself stranded (beat that for a scenario!) This innovative game from Blaby has charming graphics and good sound. Basically you must shunt the ice blocks around to escape the bees or crush them. If you're clever you can electrocute them against the walls. Joystick: Kempston. Recommended.

EMBASSY ASSAULT
Producer: ICL/Sinclair, 16K £4.95
As the nation's top secret agent your mission is to acquire top secret codes from the code room of a foreign embassy. Actually all you have to do in this dreary game is wend your way through a 3D maze, up and down stairs and find the room, then get out, all timed against the clock. No thrills no spills and very few frills. Each move means waiting interminably for the corridors to slowly build up. Nine levels with the simplest taking seconds.

ESCAPE
Producer: New Generation, 16K £4.95
Perhaps the most beautiful looking game yet for the Spectrum. Escape pits you against a 3D maze seen from slightly above so the horizontal pathways are obscured by the hedges. Somewhere in there is the key to the exit. As you enter a monster shoots in and homes in on you inexorably. Get the key and he speeds up. Get out and you're back with a maze and two monsters. Five levels and a 'no win' situation. It's depressing! One of the most panicky games we've seen. Joystick: Kempsoft II. Recommended.

ESCAPE-MCP
Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99
The Z80 processor bites back. Yes your Spectrum has gone berserk and you have been de-atomised. You must escape through nine levels while the MCP homes in on you and tries to destroy you. Escape-MCP features a series of simple but (as becomes clear when you play) fiendishly laid out mazes, representing the logic paths of the processor. You start top left and must first reach a key and then an exit to the next level. Slowly and inexorably the MCP sight homes in on you and the trick is to move along the paths in such a way that you leave yourself enough time to make the key and exit. Not at all easy. Cursor keys and user-defined, so almost any joystick can be used. An addictively infuriating game and excellent value.

ETX
Producer: Abbex, 16/48K £5.95
In 48K ETX speaks, though mostly what he says after the locquacious intro is 'Ouch!' ET is stranded on Earth searching for odd bits with which to construct a phonehome. The bits are hidden in numerous wells. He's pursued by a mad professor and a nasty from M15 (or 6 or something). Only 'young' Ernie is nice. The game is charming to look at but a little puzzling to play since it seems impossible to escape the wretched professor. Program contained on both sides of the cassette. Joystick: Kempston.

FRENZY
Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
Almost every software house has its version of the arcade favourite, 'Berserk', which pits you against evil robots in a complex of simple mazes, representing the different rooms of some alien HQ. Life in these places must be hell because all the walls are electrified, killing you and the poor old robots. Quicksilva's version is very good of its type, with simple but smooth graphics. You lose a life if you collide with wall, robot or exploding missile. Avoiding the missiles can be done by leaping through an exit into another room, but as you do hordes more robots appear. The keyboard positions are rather odd, direction and fire being controlled by keys 6-0 which makes it difficult to use a joystick. Moderately addictive but not bad for the price.

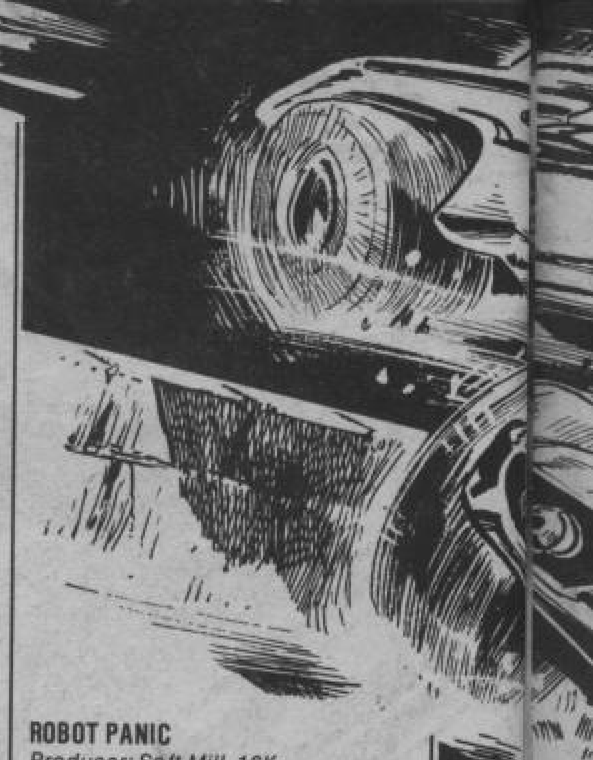
LAST SUNSET FOR LATTICA
Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50
Arcade seem to specialise in obscure titles. Lattica is a complex maze with over 100 locations and three levels populated witn androids. The walls are electrified so you must avoid them or lose one of your four lives. The aim is to discover the location of a bomb which will destroy the entire planet when it explodes, and defuse it, murdering the androids on your way. The graphics are very good and richly coloured (you're a sort of 'Horace'-like creature). Joystick: Kempston/AGF or Protek and cursor keys. Eight directional movement. Good value.

MAZE DEATH RACE
Producer: PSS, 48K £4.95
You're in your car, lost in this endless maze, avoiding the hazards like rock falls, ice, oil slicks and the maniacs in their evil cars. Collect the flags for points and watch out for fuel dumps — the thirsty car needs them frequently. Control is fast and positive, good graphics and scrolling from screen to screen is effective. A good, fast game. Unfortunately you can't alter between the three skill levels once selected, and the instructions don't tell you that it's the cursor keys which operate. No Joystick option but it will work with AGF or Protek. Machine code, moderately addictive.

RAIDER OF THE CURSED MINE
Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50
This is only a maze game in a very general sense. The game was recently upgraded to have 30 levels to play through. Each level shows a cross section through a mine with several floors visible and three lifts. Your miner (nice animation) must walk through the mine, using the lifts, and collect all the diamonds littered about whilst avoiding the spiders, ghost and boulder-throwing troll. When all the gems have been collected a lamp appears at bottom left which must be collected before progressing to the next level. Not a fast game, and at first it doesn't seem addictive either, but the ease with which you progress is matched by the ease with which you seem to lose lives. Getting to the 30th level rewards you with a picture of the surface. Nice graphics and sound, the clever player lines up all his lifts first.

ROBON
Producer: Softex, 16K £5.95
Author: Andrew Beale
This 'Frenzy/Berserk' game, unlike most of Softek's other programs, is not very good. At the slowest of the nine skill levels it's a bit boring, and at the fastest it's quite meaningless. The usual format is followed; electrified walls, robots, unkillable 'Raboks' which leave exploding mines behind. Four directional movement with unanimated characters. 100% machine code, three lives, hi-score, no joystick option. Oddly the control keys are cursor with nine to fire, so you could use AGF or Protek joysticks for the movement but not for firing.

ROBOTICS
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
The name was changed from 'Frenzy' to avoid confusion with Quicksilva's game of the same name. As usual the walls are electrified. But the graphics are much better than anyone else's version, bigger and better animated. Only the robots' heads are vulnerable, and their floating leader is invulnerable. You can only escape him by jumping into another sector. The game speeds up as you clear sectors, and more robot patrols appear. Move and fire in eight directions. Joystick: Kempston. Good value.

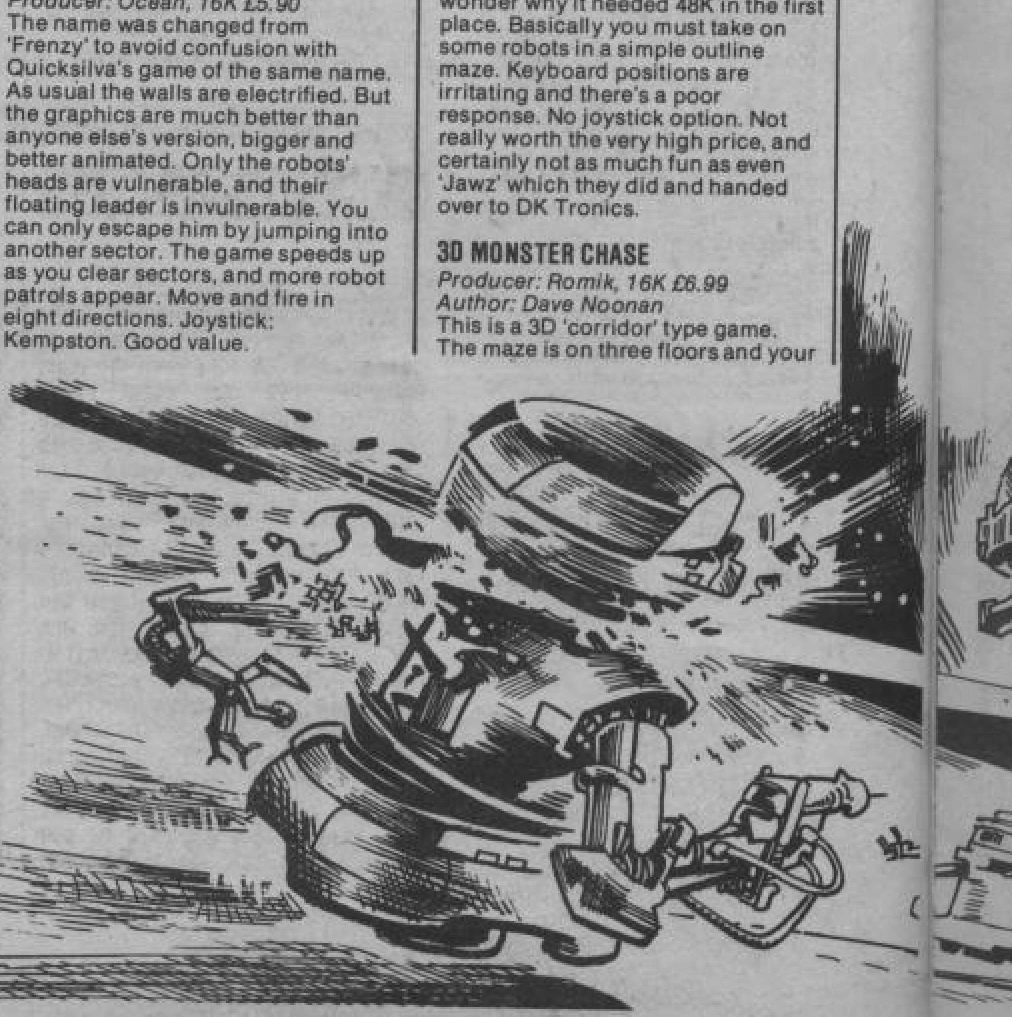


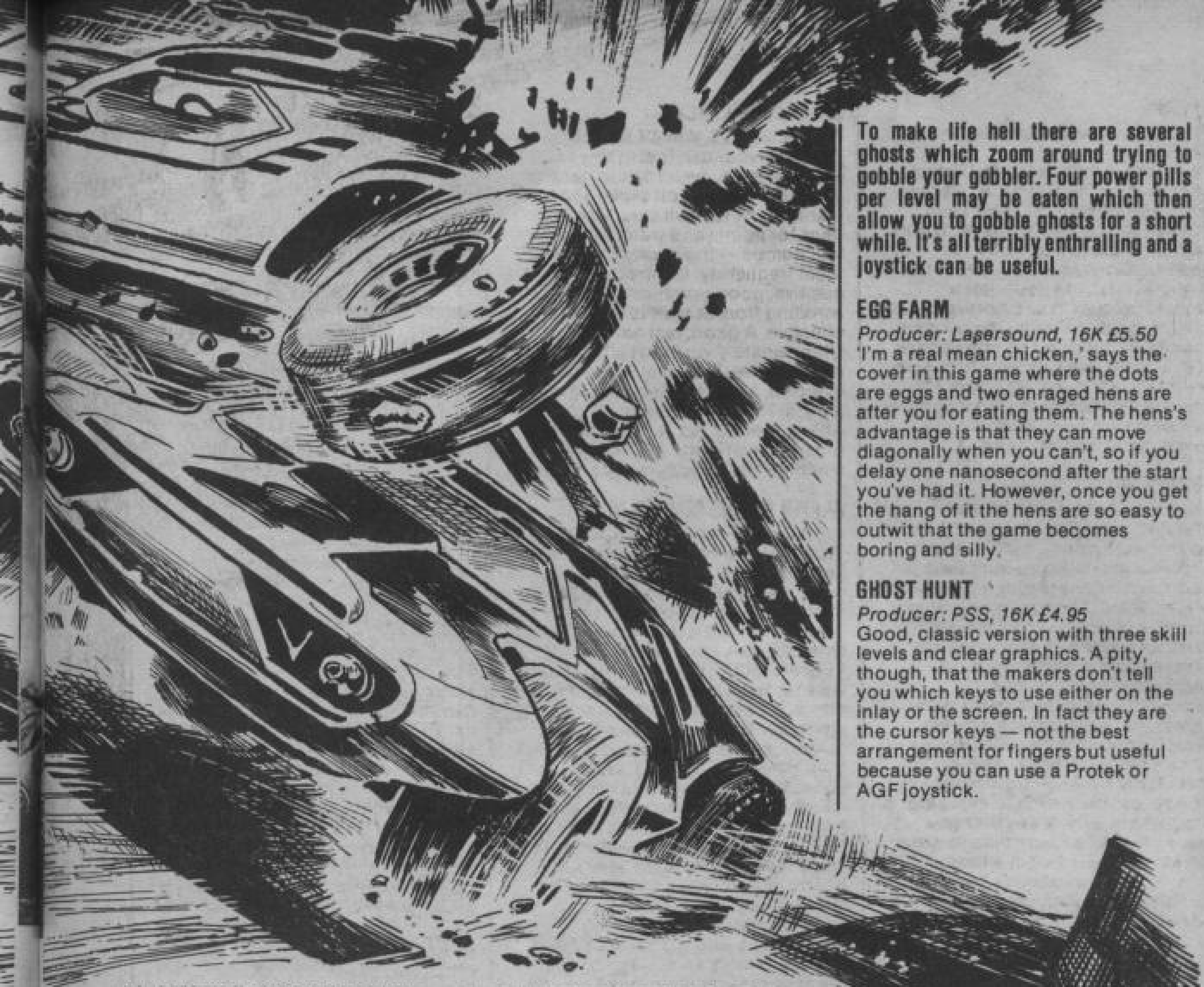
ROBOT PANIC
Producer: Soft Mill, 16K
You're the robot sent into the space ship hold to kill off the escaped nasties. A time limit imposed by the cargo hold walls moving in to crush you does not give this game enough impetus to be exciting. The graphics are limited and not smooth and the nasties remain static. Five different sets of creature. Only one life makes it irritating as you must wade through the setting up each time. Low playability. Cursor keys, so you could use AGF or Protek joysticks.

STYX
Producer: Bug-Byte, 16K
You must move your man through three horizontal areas; top, a simple maze infested with spiders to get to a door into the middle section, which is the river full of prahnas, and then to the beach, to pass through the lower area where the dead spirits lurk. If you make it through, the exit is guarded by a shrouded figure whose touch is death. It's a simple set up and would not be interesting if it weren't for the fact that it's not easy. The screens are always the same but with more denizens as you go along. Keyboard positions are good, the graphics neat and excellent eight directional movement. No joystick option.

TOBOR
Producer: Elfin, 48K £7.95
The title frame promises excitement, but the game doesn't deliver. Poor graphics and movement make you wonder why it needed 48K in the first place. Basically you must take on some robots in a simple outline maze. Keyboard positions are irritating and there's a poor response. No joystick option. Not really worth the very high price, and certainly not as much fun as even 'Jawz' which they did and handed over to DK Tronics.

3D MONSTER CHASE
Producer: Romik, 16K £6.99
Author: Dave Noonan
This is a 3D 'corridor' type game. The maze is on three floors and your





mission is to find the missing keys and return them to the start position. Then you must find a bomb and defuse it before it detonates (against the clock). To make the task harder there are monsters moving about the maze that can be killed by one of your limited supply of grenades. To help you the monsters can be seen on a radar screen. The 3D graphic representation is very good and easy to visualise. The keyboard positions are well thought out and a joystick may be used. The monsters appear very suddenly in front of you for a second before you lose your life — like a scene from Alien! Five skill levels and an absorbing game. Good value for money.

3D MAZE OF GOLD
Producer: Gilsoft, 16K £5.95
Author: T Gilberts
This is a maze without monsters or robots. The maze is seen from eye level in 3D blocks, so it's a game of orientation and geography. The aim is to wander the maze, collecting gold bars which lie on the floor and get to the level's exit quickly before the value of gold you are carrying falls to zero! This is no easy task, a pencil and pad would help. There are ten levels of play from 0 (impossible) down to 9 (village idiots). I tried village idiots — and believe me, they have to be university graduates anyway! To help, for levels 4-9 you can select an overhead plan view whenever you want which shows you your position and heading, the exit and positions of all gold bars left to collect. It doesn't show you the walls of the maze — that would be too easy. When you return to the maze itself a display tells you the value of the gold you have collected (falling all the while of course), moves made so far, level of play and a compass with a moving north. For the contemplative, an excellent game with loads of playabilty. Cursor keys, joystick: AGF or Protek.

THE WIZARD'S WARRIORS
Producer: Abersoft, 48K £4.95
This is a robot/maze game, but a considerable improvement on the 'Berserk' type. The complex is haunted by robots which fire away blindly at anything, and which you must destroy. The earlier ones are pretty dumb, but later additions get harder to hit and are better at hitting you; some are even invisible (use the radar to spot them). Machine code. Joystick: Kempston. Addictive and good value.

GHOST GOBBLING

Since its introduction Pacman has probably been the mst enduring of the arcade games. For Spectrum software companies it has also been the most imitated, with just about every producer having a go. As a result there are numerous versions available with very little to distinguish one from the other. Some of them will be the subject of a CRASH Comparison in the near future. Meanwhile we list them here very briefly, only making points where there is any point (if you see what I mean). For anyone who has never seen a pacman type game (can there be anyone?) you are presented with a simple maze, often connected left to right by a wrap-around tunnel, the passageways of which are littered with regular dots. Your gobbler must wend his way round eating up every dot like a good boy before he can progress to the next level of difficulty. To make life hell there are several ghosts which zoom around trying to gobble your gobbler. Four power pills per level may be eaten which then allow you to gobble ghosts for a short while. It's all terribly enthralling and a joystick can be useful.

EGG FARM
Producer: Lasersound, 16K £5.50
'I'm a real mean chicken,' says the cover in this game where the dots are eggs and two enraged hens are after you for eating them. The hens's advantage is that they can move diagonally when you can't, so if you delay one nanosecond after the start you've had it. However, once you get the hang of it the hens are so easy to outwit that the game becomes boring and silly.

GHOST HUNT
Producer: PSS, 16K £4.95
Good, classic version with three skill levels and clear graphics. A pity, though, that the makers don't tell you which keys to use either on the inlay or the screen. In fact they are the cursor keys — not the best arrangement for fingers but useful because you can use a Protek or AGF joystick.

GNASHER
Producer: R & R, 16K £4.95
Author: Jonathan Nixon
The maze in R & R's version is simpler than many but the reward is exceptionally clear and detailed graphics with very smooth movement. Various fruit appear to be eaten for extra points and this version doesn't suffer with virtually invisible edible ghosts. Power pills, tunnel and increasingly fast screens. Very positive keyboard action, joystick option: Kempston but most importantly user-defined keys if you don't like the cursors. One of the best gobblers around.

GOBBLE A GHOST
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
All the usual features with machine code smooth graphics. No joystick option.

GOBBLEMAN
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Another standard version, pity though that Artic couldn't have made the ghosts a little slower after eating a power pill since it makes them impossible to catch.

GULPMAN
Producer: Campbell Systems, 16K £4.95
This is slightly different in that there's only one ghost to chase you but the more dots you eat, the faster he gets. Five screens, nine speeds, no pills or tunnels, but pretty addictive.

HAUNTED HEDGES
Producer: Micromega, 16K £6.95
Author: Derek Brewster
Derek Brewster is Neptune Computing, but this 3D pacman is marketed by Micromega. The price probably reflects the fact the 3D in a title or game sells better than mere two dimensions. In effect, though, this is very much the ordinary ghost game with a running figure instead of the usual toothy orange.

HUNGRY HORACE
Producer: Psion, 16K £5.95
Many critics regard this as the definitive pacman game for the Spectrum, and of course Horace has begat a number of sequels in other categories. Highly attractive graphics and smoothly animated make it a joy to play. There are several mazes of increasing complexity to get through. No power pills — just wits. Highly recommended.

MAZECHASE
Producer: Hewson, 16K £4.95
Considering the quality of most Hewson programmes, this one is a complete mystery. Put it down to history. It's probably the simplest one available, with matchstick figures, white ghosts and some fruit as power pills. Four screens, cursor keys so works with AGF or Protec joysticks. Not very good.

MAZEMAN
Producer: Abersoft, 16K £4.95
Abersoft's maze is a bit more complex than most and the graphics are clear and bright.

MONSTER MUNCHER
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Ocean's graphics are always pleasing, and this version works as well as any other.

MUNCHER
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
A good classic version, but the inlay card is all over the place telling us N = down, when it's M, and 5 starts a new game when it's S. In fact the keys used are quite sensible. No joystick option.

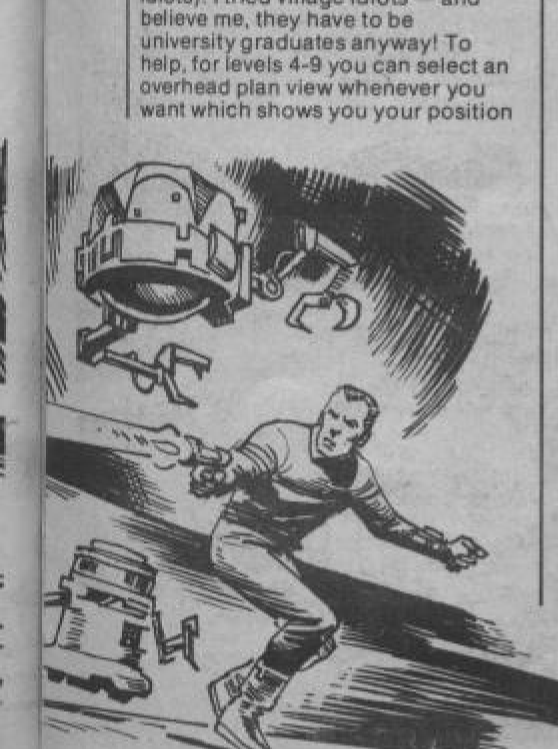
PASEMAN
Producer: Pasesoft, 16K £4.99
Another classic vers... h machi... DELETED ...graphics. Unfo... key positions thou... and no joystick option. Good value at the price.

PLATFORM GAMES

'Oh no, it wasn't the aeroplanes – it was Beauty killed the Beast,' says the man at the end of the film King Kong. As television is said to have killed off the cinema, arcade games are said to be killing off television, but good ideas cross all the barriers, so it's no surprise to see the famous Ape still going strong in the arcades.

Kong games are perhaps the best known of the platform games, but there are quite a few other types, all characterised by the need to climb ever higher either by jumping or climbing ladders and usually both. As with most arcade games joysticks are usually a help to higher scores.

BARMY BURGERS
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Author: G Capewell
Sound and graphics are strong points of Blaby games and this maddening sesame seed bun of a game is no exception from its delightful titlecard onwards. You're presented with four platforms with the various elements of three hamburgers suspended from them. The task is to walk your chef over the ingredients which drops them level by level until they make up complete burgers; burger, cheese, lettuce and top half of the bun in that order. This would all be very simple were it not for the fried egg and two sausages which dog your footsteps. A blast of pepper will hold them up but there are only five blasts per life. The chef





can move up and down the platforms using the ladders, but so can the pursuers. Each screen provides you with more eggs and sausages to chase. Three lives with points scored by releasing segments of the ingredients or squashing eggs and sausages between the falling burger bits. Addictive. Joystick: AGF or Protek and Kempston. Recommended.

DIGGER DAN

Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Digger Dan is armed only with a spade. He must dig holes in the four levels of platforms, using the ladders to get up and down. Four monsters chase him around, hopefully upending in the holes, which he promptly fills in to kill them. There are safe spots at the end of each platform but he can't linger because the oxygen's running out. An oxygen bottle appears from time to time but getting at it can be difficult. If the screen is cleared it returns with fresh and slightly more clever beasts. Only one screen and speed, but the graphics are smooth and nicely animated. Dan can jump down through the holes too, useful in a tight spot. The control key positions are sensible, but with six of them, a bit of a handful. Reasonable value for money.

GODZILLA & THE MARTIANS

Producer: Temptation, 16K £5.95
Author: Neil Streeter
It's really a Kong game except Godzilla's at the top protecting your girlfriend and the evil Martians are rolling back and forth on the platforms in between. Whilst this may be the only 16K Kong type game, it suffers sadly from that fact, with poor, unanimated graphics and a generally mean look. Also there is no joystick option and the control keys are very difficult to cope with. All in all a bit of a mess.

HOME RUNNER

Producer: Britannia, 48K £5.95
This is a lively game with attractive graphics and is really a variation on the Jumping Jack theme. Here the platforms are more solid looking and the holes open and close at random. Unlike Jumping Jack you can use the hold key to make your man hover over the holes. The various monsters jump down through the holes which makes timing an important feature of the game. On level three the Green Grinner appears, bouncing up and down, happily oblivious of the platforms or holes. Britannia is a relatively new company, so it's nice to be able to say that both their games (Stompming Stan in this section is the other) are very playable and good value.

JUMPING JACK

Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Author: Albert Ball
At first sight the extremely simple graphics might be a disappointment — but this is a classic game. Jack's stick figure is beautifully animated. The platforms are merely thin black lines. At first there are only two holes, one moving down level by level, and one moving up similarly. Each successful jump creates another hole, so it gets frustratingly difficult to progress. Should Jack fall down a hole he lies stunned, if he falls through two he's out for even longer. If he falls all the way to the bottom he loses a life. Getting right to the top results in a line from a poem — you have to collect the rest of the lines, but the poem isn't the real reward in this game — it's playing the game. Subsequent levels add more monsters which must be avoided by using the wrap around screen. By the time you're dealing with twenty holes and six monsters it's a nut house. Quite simply one of the most addictive games around and excellent value for money. Joystick: Fuller, Kempston.

KILLER KONG

Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
This is a very fine version with excellent graphics and plenty of screen variation. The detail is first class as well with neat animation. Mario's girlfriend shouting for help but rewarding the succesful climb with big kisses. Features lifts, trampolines, long narrow passages requiring expert timing to get through, a fairly butch looking Kong and probably the best sound on any program available. Joystick: Kempston or AGF & Protek. Recommended.

KONG

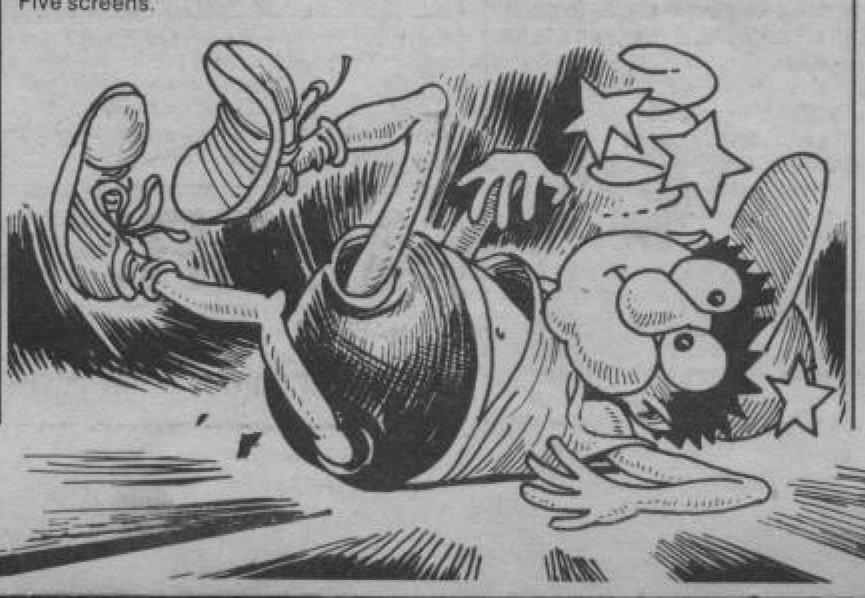
Producer: Ocean, 48K £5.90
Author: Paul Owens
Ocean's Kong is a pleasing version too, with chunky graphics starting with Kong stomping up the screen and thumping the girders into position. The animation is good with fast and positive movement. Here, the objects tend to come tumbling down the ladders, whereas in the Blaby version the platforms are more broken up and barrels etc drop off the ends of the platforms. So it's a little unfair to make lining up the man on the ladders such a critical business. Features a hammer which can knock out a few barrels. Keyboard positions are okay, Joystick: Kempston. Generally good value, but did we detect a tendency for the barrels to anticipate death? Five screens.

KRAZY KONG

Producer: C-Tech, 48K £5.50
Unfortunately not a good version, not even a good game. Loading errors seem frequent, and when you get there the graphics and animation are almost non-existent. The inlay claims three screens but only two are available due to a bug in the program which keeps returning you to screen one when you finish screen two. Not recommended.

MANIC MINER

Producer: Bug-Byte, 48K £5.95
This is the best platform game around, in fact it's probably the best arcade game for the Spectrum. From the moment the full colour title blasts onto the screen accompanied by what sounds like the massed Coldstream Guards band, it 's all wonderful. An amazing demo mode takes you through endless levels to whet the appetite. Control keys are simple; left/right/jump, and it seems incredible that Bug-Byte managed to pack so much animated detail into one 48K program. You must take Willie the Miner through the warrens of a long abandoned robot-worked mine beneath Surbiton, collecting keys at each level in order to proceed to the next. Jumping up the platforms is easy — avoiding the slime, poisonous pansies and manic mining robots is not. Some platforms collapse when you tread on them, but forward planning let's you use these on your way back down to the portal. Excellent quality all round and top notch value. Highly recommended.



MONSTERS IN HELL

Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Martin Lewis
Above the flickering fires of hell are six platforms connected by eight ladders. Your man has a hammer with which he can knock holes in the platforms for monsters to fall through, or he can bang them on the head with it. All the while the power drain is enormous — visiting the flickering crosses replenishes it, but they move once used, so you can't just hammer holes and isolate yourself from the monsters. Kill off 25 of the lesser idiots and the cleverer ghouls appear; ten of those despatched and the Mad Monk's clones appear. Ghouls must fall three levels to die, clones four, but the next lot can only die in the fires of hell itself. While the graphics are attractive, the lack of screen changes could make the game boring to play after a while and it's really a no-win game. Nine lives to help, machine code, no joystick option.

PANIC

Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
Panic is a standard digger-filler game, where you rove several floors with your spade trying to clean up the monsters by digging holes for them to fall into. A neat touch is tha[6] you must reach them quickly and batter them to death or they change colour and get out of the hole, which means you must mash em up through two holes before they die. The going gets tougher as you progress. Not bad and reasonably addictive.

STOMPING STAN

Producer: Britannia, 48K £5.95
This is a three-part game, which sarts off with moving platforms through which you must jump up when a hole appears above you, avoiding the monsters, some of whom are on their way down. When you reach the top platform collect the four keys to reach the next screen. This is a static maze populated by robots who are out to get you the moment you enter. Collect another four keys, which promptly takes you a more complex platform game with bigger monsters and holes that open and close when you're not expecting them too. Good graphics, positive controls and fun to play with a fairly high addiction rating. Joystick: Kempston.

CREEPIE-CRAWLIES

There are two types of game which come under this heading both very similar in appearance. The first is the sort where you are pitted against a centipede creature which descends from the top of the screen by moving left and right, line by line through a forest of mushrooms – the other is the sort where you are the centipede creature, travelling through a fenced garden, eating snails and whatnot else, whilst avoiding flowers, fences etc. Both types tend to be very fast and scores are improved with a joystick. Most versions are very similar – so it's a question of personal choice ...

BOZY BOA

Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
Author:
Guide Bozy round the garden, eating snails, beetles and ladybirds, at the same time avoiding the fence, flowers and your own lengthening body. Each time you eat a beetle another segment is added to you and another flower appears. Eat all ten beetles and you enter another garden with a higher fence at a

higher speed. Five levels, the fastest being quite demented. Automatic joystick selection if connected — Kempston. A nice touch is the tune, 'In An English Country Garden,' set off by bright and reasonably smooth graphics. Probably a limited appeal overall.

CATERPILLA

Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90

Like Quicksilva, Ocean are moving on to better games than the basic arcade copies, however, their standard creepie has all the usual features and plays perfectly well.

CATERPILLAR

Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95

CDS have produced a pretty classic version of the centipede game, with a fast moving caterpillar which reverses direction on contact with screen edge or mushroom, an irritating spider, an innovative mushroom-laying flea, and a poisonous scorpion which turns mushrooms red. If the caterpillar hits a red fungus, a segment drops off like a bomb. The man can move left/right and up/down (within four lines). Cursor keys so Protek, AGF joystick can be used. Lack of skill levels results in a limited playing appeal. Average value. Machine Code.

CENTIPEDE

Producer: DJ Tronics, 16K £4.95

This is another pretty standard version, complete with spider, but for its price it's probably better value than Caterpillar.

CYBER RATS

Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
Author: I Hayward

Despite its title this is a centipede game. Instead of one fragmenting creature, you are presented with individual rats which work their way down from the top of the screen and there are even faster purple ones. They hide behind clumps of grass, and once they reach the lower levels of the screen you are hard put to avoid them. Cursor keys for movement and limited upward motion, no instruction on inlay card for firing (it's 0), but Kempston, Protek or AGF joystick option. Because the game is simpler in layout than most centipede games, it is also much faster. One or two players. Average value for money.

CENTROPODS

Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99
Author: J F Cain

With its simple but charming graphics and machine code speed, Rabbit's Centropods is probably the best of the lot. There's a spider, a flea and a bottom line snail to avoid. The control keys are the most sensible I've come across — 0 for left, P for right and O/P together for up. You sail sedately down automatically. A fires. Continuous sound effects add to the thrills. If you clear the screen the wretched creature gets longer and faster. No need for a joystick here, excellent value.

MEGAPEDE

Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Andrew Beole

Softek's version of the noble creepy-crawlie game is just about as good as any. Here the scorpion tends to drop fleas rather as though they were bombs, which makes an interesting variation. Machine Code, nice graphics, nine skill levels. Good.

SLIPPERY SID

Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
Author: S Godwin

Slippery Sid is a large snake in a garden whose task in life is to eat frogs. Every time he does so a poisonous toad appears which he can't eat until having consumed a magic mushroom. Death occurs instantly if he touches the brick walls or himself. Silversoft have given enough elements to this fast game to make it quite addictive. The keyboard positions, however, are a bit daft, but you can use a Kempston joystick. Five skill levels with an extra life for getting to the fourth garden. Sound could have been better, otherwise good value for money.

SPECTIPEDE

Producer: R & R, 16K £5.50
Author: K Allison

For my money, the best Centipede game around, and for a number of reasons; the use of colour's excellent, the graphics are great with the beast even looking like a centipede for once, the sound is fun, you can fire and move in eight directions simultaneously, and everything moves fast. The usual rules apply, vertical movement is limited to the lower quarter, there are scorpions, spiders and fleas, mushrooms disintegrate with four shots. Joystick options: Mikrogen and Kempston. Good keyboard layout, and for its price, excellent value. Recommended. One or two player games.

SPECTRAPEDE

Producer: Protek, 48K £5.95

Now everyone has had their fill of basic arcade copies, many companies are getting down to producing better games and Protek have become noted for their simulation games like Airliner, which I suspect makes them far happier. Their creepie version is pretty respectable, however. All the usual features like scorpions, worms, fleas and the inevitable multi-legged monster itself. Three skill levels and hi-score. Can, of course, be played with a Protek joystick (and therefore AGF as well).

SUPER CENTIPEDE

Producer: C-Tech, 16K £5.50

C-Tech did not produce a review copy of their version which claims to have a 16K and a 48K version on the tape. We'll update after seeing the program.

FROGGERS

Having become fed up with decimating aliens, the arcade copiers turned to more domestic chores like squashing frogs under lorries. The game requires you to hop a frog across a busy highway, avoiding certain death under the wheels. Sit on a river bank avoiding the odd snake or two and take a chance of crossing the river on the back of turtles and logs, then leap to the safety of a frog home. No one's ever explained why frogs should drown in the river – still ... On the whole the game provides more interest, better graphics and a more addictivity than most arcade copies. Joysticks are more than useful. As with pacman games and centipede games there is usually very little between any version.

FROGGER

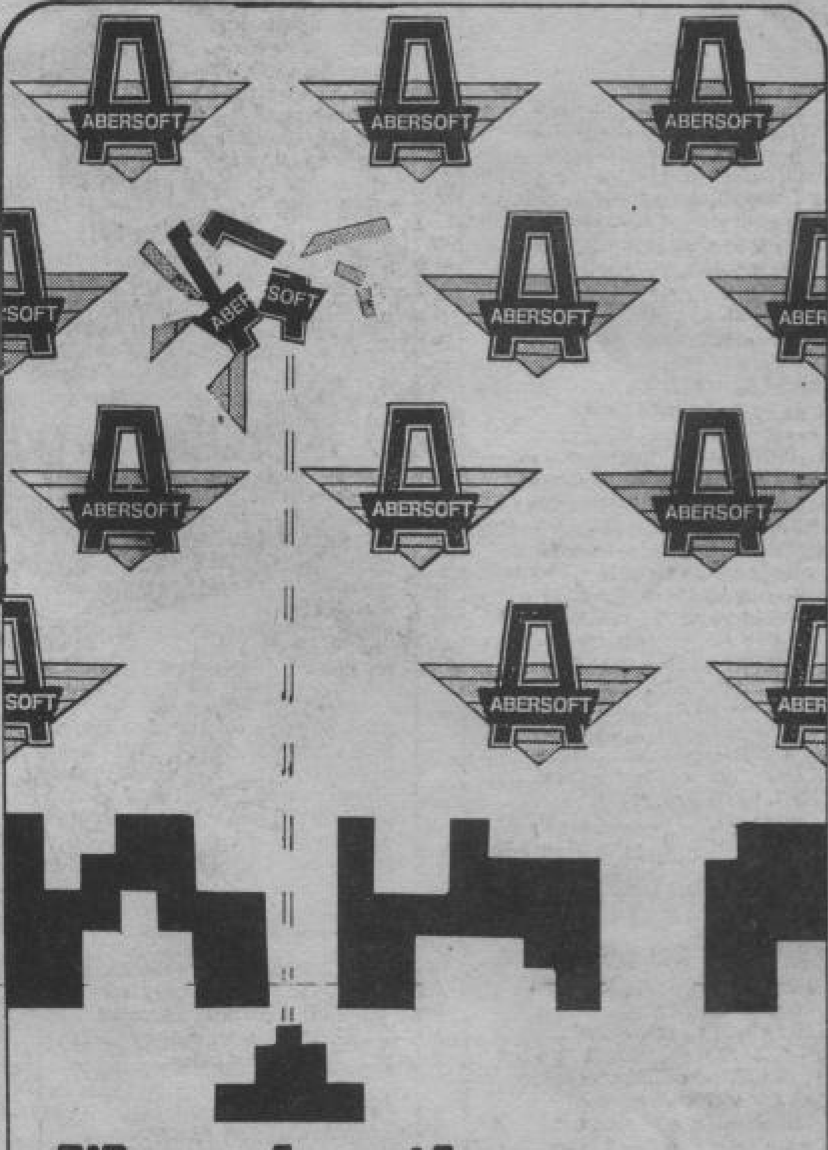
Producer: A&F, 48K £5.75

This company always produce charming graphics and their Frogger is no exception, as 48K would suggest. All the standard features.

FROGGER

Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99

Rabbit provide a four lane highway to cross, a barrier and a river full of logs and crocodiles. Here you may use the crocs for jumping on, but if you land too near the mouth you will



We make other games as well.

SPECTROID STORM: A fast action graphic space game. You dodge asteroids and zap aliens in this cosmic battle for the stars. There are bonus points to be scored for the sharp shooter with the speedy ship. The whole of hyperspace lies waiting for you when you pile on the super thrust.	Spectrum £4.45 NEW
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lose a life. Three lives, but you must get five frogs safely across before moving to the next screen for faster traffic and more crocs. Cursor keys and user-defined, so you can get practically any joystick to work. Good value.

FROGGER/SPECMAN
Producer: C-Tech, 16K £5.50
As this has two games for the price of one, it should be good value for money, but it isn't. Sorry.

FROGRUN
Producer: Anirog, 16K £4.95
Machine code and attractive graphics and good sound. Features snakes on the bank, logs, turtles, crocodiles and lady frogs to rescue for extra points. At its price, pretty good value.

FROGGY
Producer: DJL, 16K £5.95
A highly rated version with very busy 3-lane highway, turtles that sink under your weight, crocodiles in the frog homes and five lives. There's a time limit too which can be very cruel. For exra points there's a stranded frogling to rescue. Four skill levels and seven speeds. Joystick: Kempston, or AGF and Protek on the cursor keys. Recommended.

JOGGER
Producer: Severn, 48K, £4.95
Unfortunately, none of our reviewers have seen this game yet, so we'll try and catch up with the joggers another time.

LEAPFROG
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
This is a standard version which offers the usual hazards but adds a snake on the bank if you linger too long, and dragonflies in the frog homes for extra points. Attractive graphics but it's a bore waiting for that damned tune between each game. Uses cursor keys, so Protek and AGF joystick interfaces may be used.

ROAD FROG
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Ocean's version doesn't have turtles (probably went on strike) but some of the logs sink, and there are snakes on the bank. Six frogs to get safely home for a second screen and the traffic moving faster. Unlike some versions you can only go forward. No joystick option.

ROAD TOAD
Producer: D K Tronics, 16K £4.95
Marketed by DK and made by Elfin, Road Toad is a frogger by any other name. The graphics are okay but the hazards aren't that keen, and the sound is poor. There are better and more addictive versions available.

YOMP
Producer: Virgin Games, 16K £5.95
Author: Terry Murray/Roy Poole
In the main, Virgin's first batch of games were pretty poor and madly overpriced (£7.95). Now they've brought the price down, but frankly this still isn't good value. You are supposed to 'yomp' your Paras over the highway and then get them through a minefield. There's no disguising the fact that this is a frogger game with 'mined-out' pretensions. The basic program makes controlling movement very difficult and the way the traffic moves along the highway makes it almost unplayable. Only one moment in the repeating cycle can get your men through safely. In the minefield movement sensors mean sudden death through mistakes, but I wonder how many people will even bother getting there? Four skill levels, no joystick option.



GRID RUNNERS

Ever since the Movie *TRON*, grid games have been popular, almost a cult because they exemplify the computer game – simplicity, high speed, action on a strict grid as defined by the computer.

BLIND ALLEY
Producer: Sunshine Books, 16K £4.95
Author: Simon Lane
Blind Alley is what passed for sport in the year 3017, you are told on the inlay. In fact the game looks confusing at first, but that's because it is fast and there's no time to think. This really is a game where those with quick and sure instincts win. You must steer your ship round the grid in such a way that you block off other ships, forcing them into a blind alley where they are forced against your trail, their own trails, or the edge of the screen. Of course it usually happens the other way round ... You start off against two ships, then four, then 6 and so on. It gets very hard! Works with Kempston joystick. Avoid hitting reverse of the direction in which you're travelling — it's instant death. Recommended.

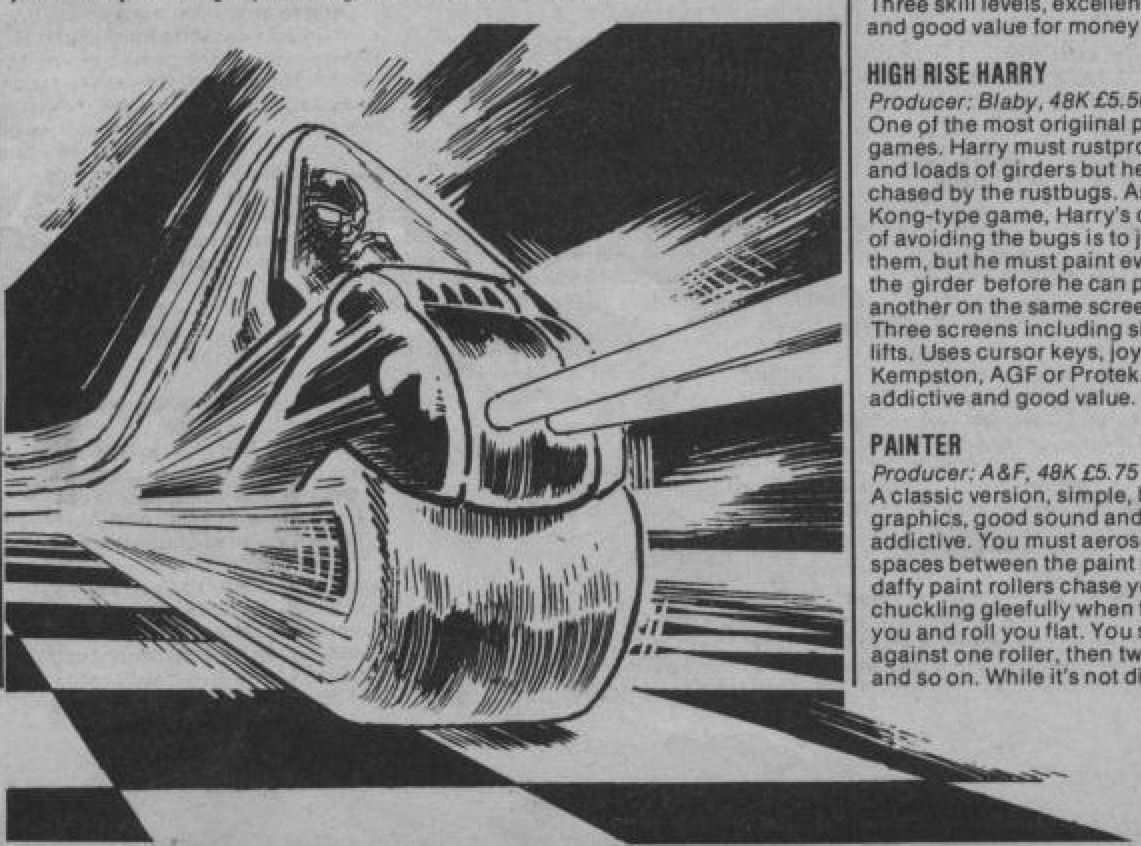
CRUISING ON BROADWAY
Producer: Sunshine Books, 16K £4.95
Author: Jeff Naylor
The graphics don't portray the famous streets around Times Square in New York as the title suggests, they could be any streets that the grid represents. You're in your car when a cop pulls in behind, you decide to make a getaway. If he catches you then the game starts from scratch. You score points by the length of line travelled before capture. Your only weapon is the facility to create a temporary block in the road and hold up the cop. Clear the frame and more chasers join in or you get a more complex grid to traverse. A simple, effective and highly addictive no win game. Joystick: Kempston (and Softlink II).

GRIDRUN
Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50
Robot security picks up your trail just when you thought you had given them the slip (trust robots to be bloody minded). Now they're catching up with you — and no one's ever survived the grid before. Actually the grid resembles a pac man type maze in this fast game. You drive around the rectangular, concentric rings, switching lanes at the compass point junctions. Driving in the opposite direction is the robot security car. Never the twain should meet! You need good reactions, but it might have been a more skilful game if there were more crossover points. No joystick option.

GRIDRUNNER
Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £6.95 (1)
More of an electronic grid meets centipede than a true grid game. See main review section.

LIGHT CYCLE
Producer: PSS, 16K £5.95
Light Cycle is similar in concept to Blind Alley where you fight it out on the grid with an opponent. In this case only two trails however, either against the computer or a second player. The graphics are simpler but more effective, representing the laser light trails left behind your craft. Seven speed levels, no joystick option. A very gast game to play for hours.

TRANSVERSION
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90 (1)
One of the very best grid games yet. Dangerously addictive. See main review section.



PAINTERS

Another of the earlier arcade type games which proved popular was Painter, and the idea has spawned many versions, several of which are available for the Spectrum. The principle behind a painter game is to make your character traverse a maze or grid, colouring the structure as he goes. Inevitably there is some nasty influence at work which tries to prevent this harmless activity ...

COLOUR CLASH
Producer: Romik, 16K £7.99
Author: I Morrison/D Anderson
Colour clash contains four phases in a paint-the-squares game which demands strategy as well as skill. In phase one you fill the numerous squares by 'painting' round them, and if you succeed, you have a chance to eat the pursuing paint pots pacman style. Phase two is a bonus points section where you must press the fire button at the right moment to guide it to the flashing arrow. Stage three is the same as stage one only you are forced to paint each square one at a time rather than dodging along any line. The fourth and most demanding, has you attempting to surround the paint pots. Three keyboard layouts, joystick: Kempston or Sinclair. Three skill levels, excellent graphics and good value for money.

HIGH RISE HARRY
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
One of the most origiinal painter games. Harry must rustproof loads and loads of girders but he's being chased by the rustbugs. As in a Kong-type game, Harry's only way of avoiding the bugs is to jump over them, but he must paint every inch of the girder before he can paint another on the same screen. Mean! Three screens including slides and lifts. Uses cursor keys, joystick: Kempston, AGF or Protek. Highly addictive and good value.

PAINTER
Producer: A&F, 48K £5.75
A classic version, simple, beautiful graphics, good sound and utterly addictive. You must aerosol the spaces between the paint pots and daffy paint rollers chase you round, chuckling gleefully when they catch you and roll you flat. You start off against one roller, then two, three and so on. While it's not difficult to



begin with, it gets pretty fast when there are several rollers up against you. Good keyboard positions, no joystick option.

TRAXX
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
Author: Jeff Minter
The twist with this painter is that the paint is elastic — it only stretches round three sides of the numerous squares. Fortunately the base of one square is already painted when you start. Nine levels. A reasonable game. See review in main section.

TREKKIES

From the earlier days Star Trek has spawned a number of computer versions, all basically alike. They usually have several skill levels and work on option menus which allow you to use Warp Engines, Impulse Engines, Phasers, Photon Torpedoes; view the short or long range scan, galaxy map or the immediate sector. Status reports show weaponry left, power, damage etc. Some give you a battle plan view, others a cockpit view with a more arcade element as you aim your phasers at the darting enemy. The enemy is usually the Klingon Empire, though there may be some Romulans around. All the games have star bases for docking and repair. The higher the skill level the more enemy ships and bases there are, and the less Federation star bases. Among the better programs, it's very much a matter of personal choice. Here we list the features of each briefly.

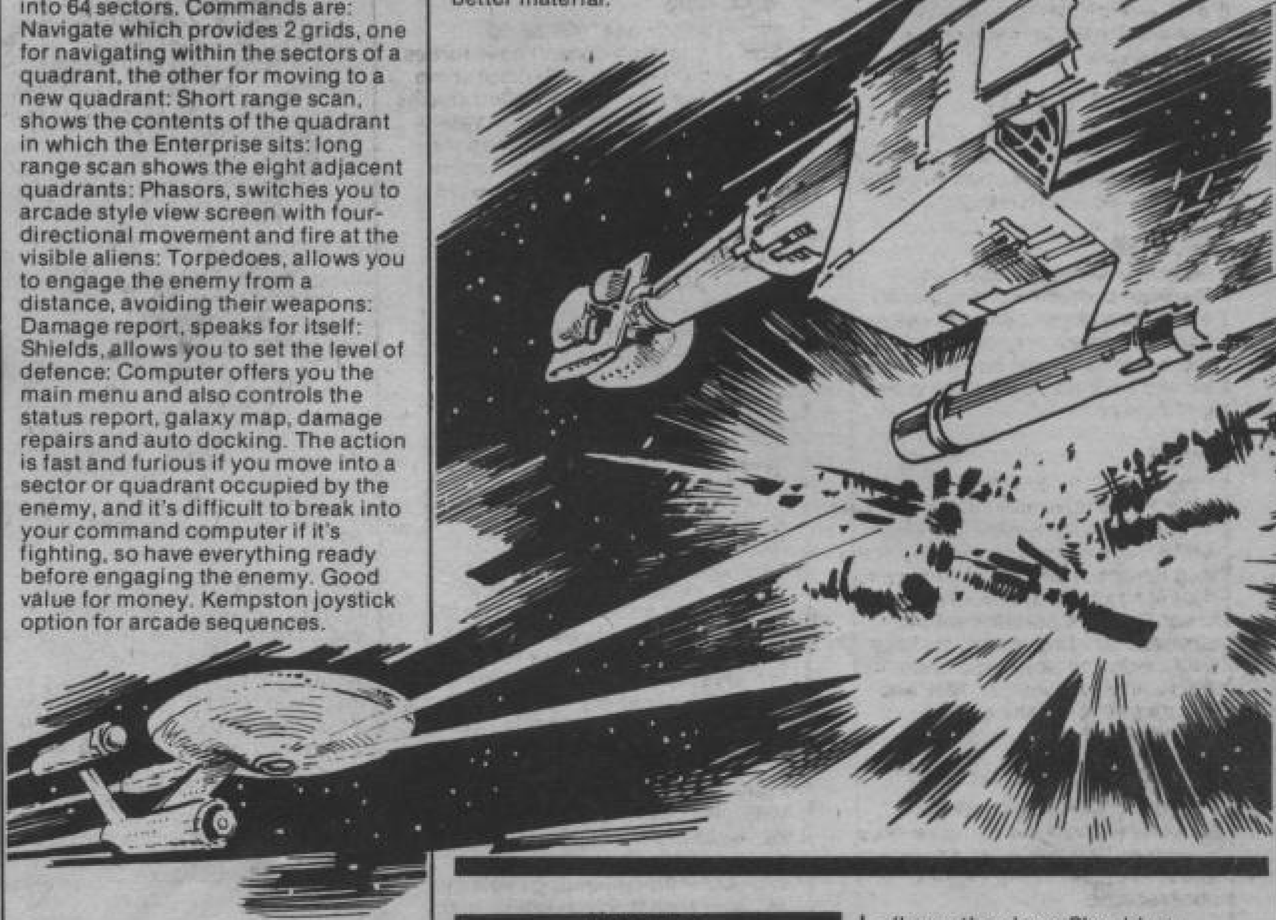
STARFIRE
Producer: Virgin, 48K £5.95
Author: M C Davis
Virgin always have good, clear instructions, and this was one of the better first issue games. Features: Galactic war report, detailing mission, aliens left, starbases and stardates left: Computer call — main menu: Long range scan, well laid out with the eight adjacent sectors shown: Navigation, menu for moving from sector to sector: Battlestations, arcade style viewscreen with four-directional movement and fire at visible enemy. Docking with a starbase is tricky, and there are also time portals in space as well as asteroid storms to contend with. On balance a reasonable game with ten skill levels.

STARSHIP ENTERPRISE
Producer: Silversoft, 48K £5.95
This comes with a good instruction manual. Two players can always play a star trek game, one reading, the other punching buttons. The galaxy map shows the 64 quadrants (8 x 8), each quadrant is sub-divided into 64 sectors. Commands are: Navigate which provides 2 grids, one for navigating within the sectors of a quadrant, the other for moving to a new quadrant: Short range scan, shows the contents of the quadrant in which the Enterprise sits: long range scan shows the eight adjacent quadrants: Phasors, switches you to arcade style view screen with four-directional movement and fire at the visible aliens: Torpedoes, allows you to engage the enemy from a distance, avoiding their weapons: Damage report, speaks for itself: Shields, allows you to set the level of defence: Computer offers you the main menu and also controls the status report, galaxy map, damage repairs and auto docking. The action is fast and furious if you move into a sector or quadrant occupied by the enemy, and it's difficult to break into your command computer if it's fighting, so have everything ready before engaging the enemy. Good value for money. Kempston joystick option for arcade sequences.

STAR TREK
Producer: Neptune, 48K £5.50
Author: Derek Brewster This version offers good value for money since the tape also contains MUNCHMAN, which happens to be a very good pac man version indeed. Neptune's Star Trek offers all the options as listed in the above review, the major difference being that it has battle plan views rather than arcade style fights with the aliens. In using the weaponry, you must enter the direction of attack (0 degrees to 360 degrees), and its strength, then sit back with bated breath as the phaser or missile trail moves across the screen towards the enemy. Instant action is required on engaging the Klingon rotters as they fire the instant you are spotted. Excellent graphics make this an engaging version to play at speeds which certainly require more than one Captain Kirk per game.

STAR TREK
Producer: Impact, 16K £5.00
Anyone thinking to themselves that here is a 16K version jolly good, should keep well away. I'm afraid this program isn't even good enough for the ZX81 from which it must have originated. Apart from the fact that it finishes loading with an OK report and nothing else, no instructions, no suggestion of skill levels (though there are supposed to be levels) not a thing to help; you then have to list the BASIC and tell it to run! There are no graphics beyond words and figures. This is totally unplayable and not acceptable by today's standards.

ZX TREK
Producer: Impact, 48K £6.50
After slating their earlier attempt, it would be nice to say something good about this version from the same company, but I'm afraid not. One reviewer points out that as it is written in BASIC it makes the game slow. Well Starship Enterprise is written in basic and that is pretty fast. Here the keyboard response is slow and erratic, there is optional sound, but sound slows it down further still, and the graphics are simply not good enough. It is also highly priced. Software producers should do themselves the favour of deleting out of date games like this one and spend some time producing better material.



ARCADE MISCELLANEOUS

AH DIDDUMS
Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Author: D H Lawson
Don't be fooled by the title — this is no game for cissies! When it first appeared it had all the reviewers tied in confused knots. You are a teddy bear, shut in the toy box with the other toys for the night, but your baby's crying so you must get out and go and comfort him. The only way out is by using all the coloured building bricks and assembling them correctly, whilst avoiding all the nasty toys who want to stop you. When you escape the box you realise it is inside another, bigger box, and that one's inside another, and so on ... What confused everyone at the time was the method used to assemble the bricks, and Imagine's cassette inlay is of no help, nor are the game's instructions on screen: this is the outline idea — pick up the brick and take to top of screen slightly to right of correct colour block, then drop it. The brick should slide into place as if by magic. Considering the packed screen, the graphics are excellent. Confusion of keys, but this isn't an arcade speed game. Watch out for clockwork soldiers, play people and the aggressive train — and the baby's crying — there, there, there ...

AQUAPLANE
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
Author: John Hollis
Many of the games in this section, almost by definition, are quite original and Aquaplane is one of them. It's a nice day and you fancy a spot of water skiing. After a moment you're suddenly surrounded by rocks, but they're fairly easy to get through. Following on though, the water's instantly full of row boats, and if you get through again the so-called G and T rich-kids arrive, incompetently flapping their yachts all over the place. Should you survive the hee-haws, there's the sharks ... Skiier and boat are seen in profile, controls (up/down/thrust) move both boat and skiier, but not strictly in relation to each other, like the real thing, the skiier inconveniently follows a slightly different path to the boat. This makes it difficult to get both safely through the gaps. It's a very enjoyable game to play, but the lasting appeal is slight. A clever touch is that the border colours are split horizontally to match exactly the colour of sea and sky in the game, thus giving the impression that the entire tv screen is in use. Try it first and buy if you like it.

CHOPPER RESCUE
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Author: G Capewell
The game starts with a helicopter dashing in to rescue the title from a dreadful spelling error, CHOPPER RISCUE it says, but the chopper comes back to insert an E and remove the I. As is their wont, scientists are being entombed by radioactive waste dropped from overflying planes. You must rescue them in your (nicely animated) helicopter by shooting away the waste and making tunnels in it to reach them. Each one must be returned to the safety of the helipad before getting the next. The gun fires in the direction of travel and there's not much time. If you get hit by the falling waste you're dead. This is a very fast game, almost impossible with the cursor keys, and difficult enough with a Kempston AGF or Protek joystick. Addictive and good value. Recommended.

COOKIE
Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
Also available in ROM cartridge form at £14.95. Ultimate's graphics are famous. In Cookie you are Charlie the Chef, with mixing bowl below and dustbins to the side. On the right is the pantry containing the ingredients which must be got into the bowl. Unfortunately, the



ingredients are pretty wild and they're accompanied by assorted objects that shouldn't be in the pantry and would upset the Ministry of Health officials if they knew about them. Using flour bombs to momentarily stun, you must knock the ingredients into the mixing bowl, and the rotters into the bin. Should you get it the wrong way round you lose points, time energy and everything. Each screen provides different and more difficult ingredients. Another game that needs a joystick, Kempston or Protek. Hi-score, one or two player games, 8-directional movement and the smoothest of graphics around. Addictive and highly recommended.

CYBERTANKS

Producer: Star Dreams, 16K £5.50
A complex maze of green blocks is the home of the enemy cybertanks. Take your tank round and shoot 'em up. You can blast away the blocks to get at them, but they are fast. Three lives, hall of fame, joystick: Kempston AGF or Protek. Nice graphics and playable, but perhaps not very addictive.

GOLD DIGGER

Producer: Blaby, 48K £4.95
It's all underground and you're tunnelling mines looking for the gold nuggets. Purple gnuggets gnashers are hot on your trail, however, so it is important to dig strategically round the red rocks so you can dislodge them to block off the tunnels or even drop them down and squash the gnashers. Nine speed levels. Joystick: AGF or Protek, Kempston. Cursor keys. Not as addictive as most other Blaby games, but a good beginner's game anyway.

GOLD MINE

Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
They say this is a strategy game, but that's hardly true. You do need some strategy to go for the gold in the quickest way, but it's not the main ingredient. Use the lift to go up or down from the surface and then dig towards the gold sites. Not everything that glitters is gold though. Tunnels can collapse and there are underground streams. Energy runs out fast underground, especially if you are carrying gold. In addition, the lift may collapse if you are carrying too much weight. Replenish energy by returning to the surface and depositing gold in the bank. In any event, a rather slow game with limited appeal, but probably good value for younger children.

GROUND FORCE ZERO

Producer: Titan, 16K £5.00
At first glance it looks like a simple game, but in fact it is quite hard. Very similar to Romik's 'Spectra Smash', which has more options than this version. Your plane keeps crossing the towering skyscrapers of New York, looking for a place to land. There isn't anywhere, so with a genocidal brainwave you decide to bomb the city flat to make a landing strip. With each pass over the city your plane gets lower, so it's essential to knock out the biggest towers before they knock you out. Several skill levels with taller buildings. Simple to play with only a bomb control. Despite its simplicity, reasonably addictive.

GUN LAW

Producer: Vortex, 16K £5.95
In real life the famous James Gang were reputed to be lousy shots, unable to hit a man six feet from them when all five tried to gun him down. However, Vortex have put the whole thing right with this well made programme where, as Marshall, you can stalk them down the dusty streets of town, firing at figures as they appear in doorways and windows. Your reflexes must be fast as you won't get a second chance from these baddies. Bullets are restricted, so it's important not to shoot innocent people. Despatching a baddie earns you dollars. The graphics are generally good, although the gunsight could have been better. Reasonably interesting and indecently addictive.

JAWS REVENGE

Producer: Workforce, 16K £5.95
This is a game for hungry people. You're a shark on a jaws-agape-feeding-frenzy. Fish, swimmers (moving at Olympic speeds) and boatmen all go down your throat. Some fish have a habit of turning red and poisonous, so don't eat those, and the fishermen in their boats throw harpoons or drop depth charges to stun you. You can catch the depth charges and defuse them before they reach the sea bed. And the sea bed itself isn't flat so don't run into it. It's a sort of Penetrator meets Galaxians under water. An amusing game with good graphics. No joystick option.

JAWZ

Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
On the same theme, Jawz is the other way round. You must use your underwater gun sights to shoot up marauding sharks, whilst avoiding the gunge dropping from poisonous jelly fish on the surface. The game was originally made by Elfin — it's being marketed by DK Tronics probably hasn't made all that much difference because unfortunately it has a very limited appeal for serious arcade addicts. Good for younger children.

JUNGLE FEVER

Producer: A&F, 16K £6.90
Get your man to jump over the traps dug by Pigmies and then swing across a pit using a rope tied to a tree. What comes after that is hard to say because this game with its effective graphics is not easy. The damned rope got me every time. Good fun to play and reasonably addictive but perhaps a little overpriced. No joystick option.

JUNGLE TROUBLE

Producer Martech, 16K £6.95
A game with a similar theme to Jungle Fever. Collect an axe and leap across stepping stones set in a crocodile infested river. On the other side you climb a ladder to get to the trees, which you must chop down. The trees will fall on you (if you're not quick to jump out of the way) and they blunt the axe — so back for another. Monkeys live in the trees and steal your axe but you can chop them with it — if it's not already blunt. If they steal it — it's back for another. With the forest laid waste all you have to do is swing across a fire pit using a rope, jump a chasm and then home for tea. A busy game with plenty of opportunities for failure and so pretty addictive.

KNOT IN 3D

Producer: New Generation, 48K £5.95
Extremely hard to see how this extraordinary game works at first. It could really be thought of as a grid game or a bozy boa game but with you as the snake actually in the screen but in a 3 dimensional space. Confused? Well you will be. Steer yourself through the white void avoiding your own brightly coloured trail and that of the chasers, twisting and turning to find space to move in before it all gets filled up. Uses cursor keys so AGF or Protek joystick would help. Tremendous value for money, and addictive too.

MINED-OUT

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £4.95
Author: Ian Andrew
Forget the inlay card, which was probably written by a stoned Quicksilva copy writer, and play the game! You are presented with a blank field, densely sown with mines and you must get to the other side without blowing up. Take a step at a time and watch the warning which tells you whether there is a mine in an adjacent square — is it left, right or ahead? What happens when there are two or even three mines? The tension mounts and clever, logical thinking is your only safeguard. Level two offers maidens in distress to be rescued and later levels still confront you with things that chase and make you move quickly. Nine levels in this most nail-biting game. And it hasn't dated a bit, still worth the money if you haven't tried it. Recommended.

MOLAR MAUL

Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
With a wicked glint in their teeth, Imagine invite you to take part in the fight against the DK (Tronics) menace. Your weapons are a toothbrush and some Imagico toothpaste. The screen opens (literally) with a gaping mouth and lively clean white teeth. Toffees and other gunk appear at the centre, exciting the interest of the horrid DK bugs, and in seconds the teeth are beginning to yellow, purple and black out all over the mouth. The trick with this game is manoeuvring the wretched toothbrush into exactly the correct position for the toothpaste to be squeezed from the tube. An excellent game with wonderful graphics, but so depressing to watch! I'm afraid it left an unpleasant taste in my mouth, but I have to say it's good value. Joystick: Fuller.

OSTRON

Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Formerly named Joust, Softek for some reason, changed its name. There's a lot of the 'You're the sole surviving White Knight, Guardian, of the Lore, etc' on the inlay blurb, but basically you're on this Ostron thing (electronic ostrich) and the enemy are variously-coloured buzzard thingies. There are several floating platforms on which you can land before rising to the occasion by flapping your wings and attacking the enemy. When you meet, face to face, the one's who's highest wins. First buzzards are pretty daft and easy, but later ones become fiendish in their attempts to get you. All in all a very enjoyable game, with good graphics and sound. Don't hit the water — you drown. 100 percent machine code, joystick: Kempston. Good value.

PSST

Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
It sounds a bit rude but it's a wonderful game with Ultimate's usual magnificent graphics. Robbie the robot must keep the swarming insect life from eating his plant. To do this there are various spray cans lining the brick walls of the garden. Each level adds a different insect to the collection and the trick is that you must use the correct spray on the right insect or it only serves to stun for a moment. The insects also kill off Robbie as well as the plant, which shrinks away if it's eaten for too long. Letting it grow results in a bloom and a new level. Amazing graphics, 100 percent machine code, 8-directional movement, one or two player game, sensible control keys and Kempston joystick. Recommended. Also available in ROM cartridge form for £14.95.

QUACKERS

Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99
Quackers is designed more for children than shoot 'em up addicts, but its cheerful graphics should make it popular. It's set in a fairground duck shooting gallery, where four rows of repeated objects, ducks, cats, rabbits, faces and a giant turtle, move alternately in opposite directions before your gun barrel. User-defined keys or cursor, which means you can use AGF or Protek joysticks.

RACE FUN

Producer: Rabbit, 48K £5.99
The Spectrum hardly has the sort of graphics capability of the big road racing games in the arcades, but as far as Spectrum racers go, this is a pretty good one. An overhead view shows the track which varies from wide to very narrow, straight and curved. Off you go with several others cars. Bumping another car or running off the road, slows you down and costs fuel heavily. The object is to get as many points as possible before running out of petrol. The graphics are very good



with the cars being quite large. User-defined control keys (accelerate, brake, left, right) or cursor so you can use a Protek or AGF joystick.

SHADOWFAX
Producer: Postern, 16K £5.95
Shadowfax came out with a lot of ballyhoo at £7.95, which was grossly overpriced, so it's nice to see Postern have dropped it now. No one can complain about the graphics which are quite excellent. Unfortunately the game has very little else to offer. You're mounted on your white charger (the inlay blurb might lead to suppose this was some Hobbit-like adventure) and riding against the black horses that gallop on from the left at random heights. You can fire a bolt at the approaching enemy but you must then explode the bolt at exactly the right moment. And that's the game — you are up against the points. Mind you, it is mesmerising, so you do make mistakes. Definitely a game to get a look at first — if you like the idea, you won't regret the graphics. No joystick option.

SHARK ATTACK
Producer: Romik, 16K £5.99
Author: Ian Anderson
The theme from 'Jaws' works nicely but the rest of the continuous sound will eventually drive you mad. You must save octopusses (or octopi) from the sharks by weaving a protective net around the octopus. Should a shark eat the octopus before you screen it, then the shark can eat your net. Having either succeeded or failed in this task, the rest of the game is to fill up as much of the screen with net without getting eaten yourself. Three levels, one or two player games. Joystick: Kempston or Sinclair. A game with very limited appeal and no addictive qualities, but it might well appeal to younger children, a sort of Painter meets Jaws.

SIEGE
Producer: Postern, 16K £5.99
Author: Mike Singleton
Throw rocks down from a high castle wall onto the massed attackers trying to climb up. As the rocks fall they knock the attackers off, often several at a time as one falling man catches another. The stick figure animation is cute and the game should appeal to younger children, but it is very limited as far as the serious addicted arcade player is concerned. Simple control keys.

SNAKE PIT
Producer: Postern, 16K £5.95
Author: Mike Singleton
This is pacman variant, but it is too original to lump in with the rest of the yellow gobblers. The 'maze' is a live, wriggling one. Seven different coloured snakes are trapped in their nests, surrounded by a screenful of green eggs. Your job is to eat all the eggs. Only the red snake can eat eggs, so it instantly frees itself and begins eating round the screen, freeing the other snakes as it goes. When you meet a snake head on there is a nasty little gulping sound and that's it until you press S for another game. Should you clear the screen you then get a chance to eat the snakes (tail first) as well as the eggs. I never got there; this is very difficult. The graphics are superb, quite enough to turn the stomach! Pity the control keys are so awkward, and no joystick option. Addictive and good value.



SPECTRA SMASH
Producer: Romik, 16K £6.99
Author: John Bell
This is similar to Titan's Ground Force Zero, but rather more complex, in that you have limited height control over the plane, and there are gun turrets on some buildings firing at you, none on the easiest level, more and more on the harder ones. Bombing the guns first obviously helps. Should you land successfully, having bombed the lot flat, the angry natives reward you by sending out a fuel tanker so you can take off and do the thing over again at a higher level. Of course they win in the end! Three lives, hi-score, eight levels, joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, Sinclair. m/c. Recommended.

TRANZ AM
Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
It's post-holocaust America and the country's a barren desert with a few cities here and there where you can get fuel. Otherwise a clutch of Mad Maxalikes in deadly Black Turbos are out to kill you while you hunt the wastes looking for eight gold cups. The playing screen is only a 600th of the available area. Instruments on the left show; time taken, miles travelled, a map of the States showing cities and your location, local radar showing cups (if any) and enemies, speedo, fuel gauge, engine temperature and lives left. 8-directional movement, excellent graphics, highly playable. Joystick: Kempston. Highly recommended. Also available in ROM cartridge form for £14.95.

TURBO DRIVER
Producer: Boss (UK), 16K £5.95
Another for the racing car addicts. Turbo Driver features very large vehicle graphics and an attempt (not entirely successful) at 3D through perspective. Six other cars leap away from the starting line when you stall. You must catch them up. The cars and several other hazards make life difficult, and if you go too carefully you'll run out of fuel. The track is quite straight, and there aren't those wonderful explosions of the original arcade version, but this is a popular program and does as well as the Spectrum will allow. m/c. Joystick: Kempston.

3D COMBAT ZONE
Producer: Artic, 48K £5.95
According to Artic, this is their best-selling program to date, and no wonder. The first real 3D effect in the Spectrum. Travel across the flat plain and battle with enemy tanks, flying saucers and super tanks — a kill or be killed battle of wits among the pyramids in real time. The game gives a tremendous sense of moving about in a space and can be quite hpynotic. Battle radar to spot the enemy and calculate distance. Joystick: Kempston. A first rate game and highly recommended.

3D DESERT PATROL
Producer: Computer Rentals, 16K £5.95
This simply isn't a very good prgram . The 3D is primitive and the graphics uninteresting. You must take your tank in between minefields to the eventual safety of a road, whilst avoiding fire of enemy tanks. For a start off you cannot move and fire at the same time; if an enemy tank gets into position and fires everything stops and you're dead — no evading; to avoid the enemy you merely turn until they disappear from the screen; if you creep round the edge of minefields then they won't fire on you anyway. So all it adds up to is a dull and boring game. Cursor keys and 0 to fire — allows use of AGF or Protek joysticks.

3D TANX
Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
3D here refers to the distant bridge where rows of tanks pass before your gunsight and the realistic trajectory of your shells which must be aimed right to stradle the thickness of the bridge. The graphics are very good and so is the sound. Skill and timing are essential to good scores — and staying alive, because the tanks fire back. Nowhere near as easy as it looks, and at the price, excellent value. Joystick: Kempston with Softlink II.

3D TUNNEL
Producer: New Generation, 16/48K £5.95
You're rushing headlong down a tunnel and different objects flash past you, which you must shoot. There's bats, spiders, rats and finally a delightful Underground train, complete with twinkling headlights and passengers inside. The latter must be dodged rather than shot. Running into the sides of the tunnel cause loss of a life (five in all), and you can undertake this subterranean madness at three speeds. In 16K it loads in two parts and there is no Underground train. Mixed opinions, some liked it, some didn't.

3D VORTEX
Producer: J K Greye, 16K £5.95
This is very similar to 3D Tunnel, except that the tunnel (or vortex) is defined in multitudes of coloured dots rather than solid blocks, which gives more of a tunnel-like feel. The tunnel also twists and squirms like a mad thing so it's quite a trick to stay safely in the centre of it. On the other hand, the 3D animation of the objects isn't quite so good and there are no skill levels which means it quickly loses interest. There is a long but very amusing intro in the 2-part load. User-defined control keys, so it works with almost any joystick. Good value but limited playability.

TRAIN GAME
Producer: Microsphere, 16K £5.95
It's hard to see this game replacing the fun of playing with real electric trainsets, but in an age where even those are out of date, maybe this will be a good substitute. There is a choice of two track layouts to load, and then seven skill levels, with levels one to six having five sub levels and the seventh having nine sub levels. All the points are lettered and you must move the trains round without crashing them and pick up passengers at the stations. Fun to play and plenty of scope for enjoyable disaster!

ZIP ZAP
Producer: Imagine, 48K £5.50
Author: Ian Weatherburn
In Zip Zap you are a severely damaged robot with a motor that won't turn off and only limited braking power, so you tend to travel in circles. A teleport delivers you (nice graphic) into a swirling mass of miserable aliens from whose deadly touch you are partly protected by a failing shield. The idea is to buzz chaotically around in confusing circles to collect four power units. When you touch one it automatically attaches itself to the teleportal. When all four are in position you can get back to the teleportal in time. By Imagine's standards, not their best game, but still better than most games around. Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, Fuller.





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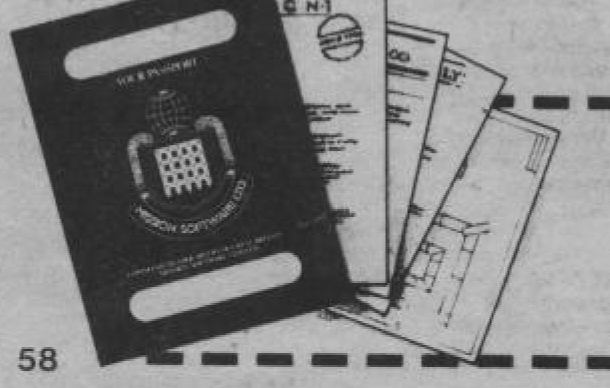
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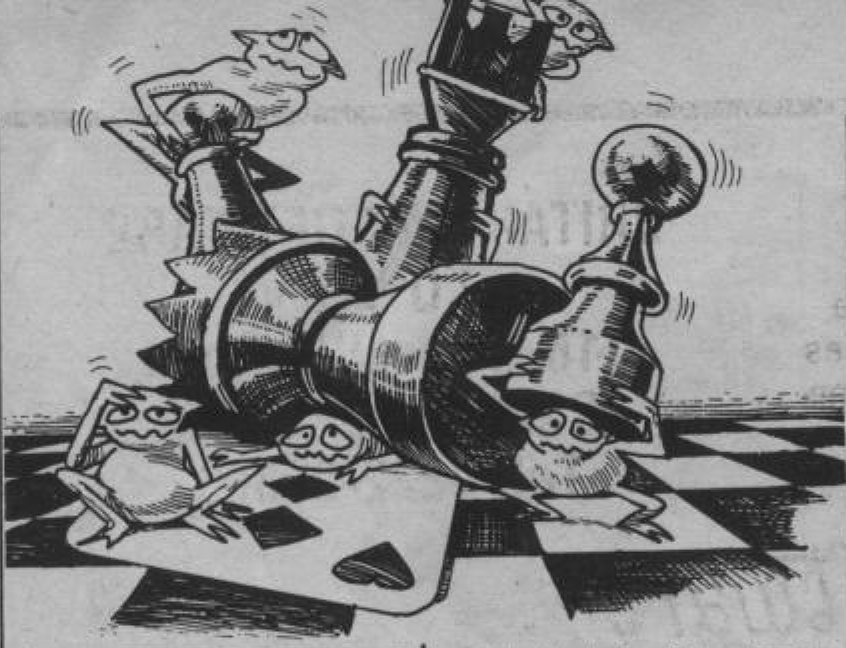
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CARDS, BOARDS & GAMBLING

We were tempted to call this section *CARDBOARD GAMES.* Sadly, quite a lot of games in this section are pretty flimsy. Part of the problem is that as soon as you remove the physical reality of dealing cards, gambling real money or playing with friends, the game loses a lot of its interest. But in cases like the Psion Scrabble, the programs are not only excellent, but some of the tedious setting up is taken away. It's obviously a question of personal choice ...

BACKGAMMON
Producer: CP Software, 48K £5.95
Backgammon is a board game using dice and counters. Its complexities are too detailed to go into here, but it is important that the cassette inlay contains full instructions for the beginniner. The CP Software version does so. Full board and counter display with two on-screen dice. For a single player against the computer.

BACKGAMMON
Producer: Hewson, 16K £5.95
Clear and simple graphics make this a good version which does well within 16K. Full instructions on program and game contained in insert. Invalid moves refused with alternate moves suggested. On-screen dice, four game options. For a single player against the computer.

BACKGAMMON
Producer: Psion, 16K £5.95
One can usually expect a lot from Psion, and this game is no exception. Very good graphics and instructions with four skill levels, on-screen or throw your own dice. Good demo mode.

BRIDGEMASTER
Producer: Bridgemaster, 16K £24.95
If Backgammon is a difficult game to explain, then Bridge, the ultimate card game, is impossible. Bridgemaster is a marvellous beginner's course in learning how to play the game. The package includes a computer tape, a commentary tape, very well read and which takes you through the early playing stages, and a book *Begin Bridge with Reese,* which is included for general reference. The demo 'automode' plays through a hand for you in combination with the commentary tape. This is very much a tutorial program — you can play through a hand where the program only allows you to play the card it expects, beeping if you play the wrong one. In this way you become accustomed to the Bridge 'conventions', and it shows you how to take tricks, bid and make contracts and the esoterica of scoring. Uses 55 different deals for teaching. If you want to become proficient in playing Bridge then this is an excellent program, making fine use of the computer and well worth the high price.

BRIDGE TUTOR
Producer: CP Software, 16K £5.95
Two programs, each at £5.95, Beginners and Advanced. Works from 40 pre-dealt hands, each hand used to illustrate a particular aspect of bidding and card play. Conventions used are Acol, Blackwood and Staymer. Accepts only correct bid or card.

CHALLENGE
Producer: Temptation, 16K £5.95
Challenge provides two games on one tape, a version of Higher Lower, and Master Code deluxe. In the first you guess the value of the next card turned up and may gamble a winning line of five cards. In Master Code you must guess the colour code the computer sets up, or set up your own for the computer to guess. Graphics generally very good, but playability seeps away rapidly.

CHESS
Producer: Artic, 48K £8.45
There isn't much to choose between the quality of graphics in most of the chess programs available, all are pretty good. This program offers seven levels of play, four of which are within competition time limits. Full analysis, recommended moves, save game.

CHESS
Producer: Psion, 48K £7.95
Psion's sensible graphics make this an easy game on the eye. You may play either black or white against the computer, reverse roles or change the skill level during a game.

CHESS II
Producer: Artic, 48K £9.95
There's much argument over which is actually the best chess program for the Spectrum. Artic have produced a number of fine tapes, but this one stands out well against everyone else's. There are 1000 levels of play — you choose the maximum response time for the computer, and that dictates the skill level. When pitted against other computer programs, Artic's has consistently beat them — so they claim! But see for yourself. You may change sides, add or remove pieces, list or print out all moves made, and the computer will recommend a move.

CHESSPLAYER
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.94
The Chess Player speaks, at least briefly when he announces himself, thereafter he contents himself with on-screen remarks like, 'that was a pathetic move'. A useful feature is the ability to alter the colours of board and pieces to suit yourself. Six skill levels with varying response times. A good starter's program, because the computer does lose on the lower skill levels, which is encouraging! Computer-recommended moves, but watch it closely — it cheats sometimes!

CHESS THE TURK
Producer: OCP, 48K £8.95
None of our reviewers have actually seen this program yet, but it has been generally highly regarded by most critics. We will deal with it in more detail at a later date.

CHESS TUTOR
Producer: Artic, 16K £6.95
Whilst limited in its playing levels, this game allows you to learn chess against the computer, by showing you how. You can also play a game against the computer and all legal moves are allowed. Recommended moves, setting up board and save game.

CYRUS IS CHESS
Producer: Intelligent Software, 16K/48K £9.95
This program is winner of the Second European Microcomputer Chess Championship. The 48K side has more sophisticated options such as altering the colours of board and pieces, printouts and game saving. Cursor keys movement allows you to analyse a move or take the piece back. Illegal moves are buzzed. Eight skill levels and a problem level system whereby the computer can be instructed to look for a mate in one, two or three moves. Comes complete with an instruction manual and a library of opening moves. Excellent value.

DERBY DAY
Producer: CRL, 48K £5.95
This race simulation game offers all the fun of the gee-gees without the stress of attending a meeting; or replaces those parlour versions with the rolled out track and wooden horses that were once popular. Up to five players may bet either for points or pence — if it's money, you keep your own book. three levels are offered and when all is ready the computer scrolls the race before your eyes (machine code) slowing down to slow motion as the race nears the finish line. If required a photofinish is provided. Good instructions and graphics.

DOMINOES
Producer: Micromega, 16K £4.95
A competent version of the famous pub game, marred by a complex and unorthodox way of present the play. Dominoes may be familiar to most, but if not there are sensible instructions — provide your own beer though.

DOMINOES
Producer: Phipps Assoc, 16K £4.95
Phipps' version is somewhat better as far as playing goes, with the familiar right angle shapes making life easy, adding up the adjoining ends to make multiples of five or three. 72 points to win.

DO NOT PASS GO
Producer: Workforce, 48K £6.95
A very good computer version of THAT FAMOUS GAME whose name no one dares utter for fear of law suits. Up to six players can take part with all the usual features like buying, selling, mortgaging, houses, hotels, jail, passing GO, Community Chest and Chance. Each player gets £1,500 to start and the screen displays all the relevant info you could want. A pad and pencil are handy though, if you don't want to keep asking the computer to list your possessions. Very good graphics within the Spectrum limitations. The game can be saved at any time.

JACKPOT
Producer: CRL, 48K £4.95
A fruit machine game with full features including, nudge, gamble and hold. You start off with 200 units and each spin costs 10. A neat touch is the money token rolling along the bottom of the screen into a slot, and the payout, which on a jackpot can take almost half a minute! Written in basic, but reasonably fast and smooth.

FRUIT MACHINE
Producer: DK Tronics, 48K £4.95
The title says it all — the only money you can lose here is the price of the cassette! Features nudge, hold and gamble with good, colourful graphics.

GO TO JAIL
Producer: Automata, 48K £6.00
Automata's version of THAT FAMOUS BOARD GAME differs from the one by Workforce in that it doesn't show the whole board at once, preferring to concentrate on three squares at a time. This does make the graphics a little easier on the eye, but removes some of the fun as well. 2-5 players can take part, with the computer acting as either a banker or a player (useful because you can play in one against the computer). The computer is a pretty mean tycoon as well. Contains every usual feature of the board game and is good value for money.

MASTERCHESS
Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £6.95
A program with ten playing levels, options to alter the board and piece colours to suit, setting up the board — good for problem solving — recommended moves and game saving, all make Mikrogen's chess game a strong contender.

MONTE CARLO
Producer: Micromega, 16K £4.95
Two games on one tape, casino style Blackjack (Pontoon) and Craps. The Blackjack games has fine graphics and plays the standard rules, but suffers from a lack of interesting options, like buying cards, burning and splitting. The Craps game is the famous dice game of American movies and features a hand shaking the dice until you press the key to release them. Despite the usual lack of atmosphere that you expect when playing communal games with a computer, this program is an attractive one, even addictive.

OTHELLO
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
The 19th Century board game is simple to play, difficult to win. Also known as Reversi, there are several versions. This is a standard one. You can play another person, play the computer, or watch the computer play itself (useful for learning, but not much fun). If you want to play another person, then you're better off buying a real board game version. Computer-recommended moves if stuck.



REVERSI
Producer: Artic, 16K £5.95
Clear colours make this easy on the eye. Game features four skill levels and game save.

REVERSI
Producer: Sinclair, 16K £7.95
Excellent graphics, nine skill levels to choose from and you can watch the computer play or play against the machine. Hi-res graphics and machine code. One of the best versions, but so it should be for the price.

ROULETTE
Producer: Micromega, 16K £4.95
If gambling games lack excitement when issued forth from a TV screen then at least they must have exciting graphics to make up for it. Unfortunately the wonders of the spinning roulette wheel are denied us in this game. All you see is a line drawing of the wheel while a flashing number indicates the wheel numbers. All bets possible, fun in occasional doses.

SUPERCHESS II
Producer: CP Software, 48K £7.95
There has been much argument between Artic and CP Software over claims for this program, Artic saying their equivalent game beats CP's every time. Nevertheless, this version is very good, with clear graphics, the option to change playing colours and seven levels of play. Several standard openings programed, recommended move and a very helpful HELP which will list the available options.

SCRABBLE
Producer: Psion, 48K £15.95
It may seem a lot of money to pay out, but if you enjoy playing Scrabble, you'll love the Spectrum version — even if you don't like Scrabble, you'll love the Spectrum version! There's no denying that this is a fabulous program. It allows you to do anything at all you would do in real Scrabble, and if you're playing against the computer it allows you to cheat — but you wouldn't do that, would you? Graphics display is crystal clear; your tile rack can be juggled to make up words, the computer tells you what your word will score and lets you take it back if you think you can do better. Up to four players, the computer may be one or all of them. You can select to see the computer 'thinking' if you wish. Only one failing, the Spectrum seems to get away with some rather odd two-letter words — and you can't challenge its 11,000 word vocabulary. Highly recommended.

TOOTIE FRUITY
Producer: Dream Software, 48K £5.95
Author: S Hillyer
Another one arm bandit game with nudges, holds, gamble and jackpot payours visible at the side of the display. This is a version we haven't been able to see yet, so judgement is reserved!

VOICE CHESS
Producer: Artic, 48K £9.98
With similar specifications to the 'Chess' program from Artic, this version will talk you through your game and make comments. Seven levels of play, save, recommended moves, set up board. A good solid game.

YAHTZI
Producer: Workforce, 48K £5.50
Yahtzi, which also gets called Yangtze, Yahtzee and even Yahtcee, is a complex dice game, not unlike poker dice. It is based on the throw of 5 dice, which are shown in the upper half of the screen, while the lower half shows the poker scores, pairs, three of a kind, full house etc. Since between 2 and 6 people can play, it can be party fun time, but I still think this sort of game works better with everyone facing inwards, rather than in a line watching TV.

ZX DRAUGHTS
Producer: CP Software, 48K £5.95
Oddly enough, considering how many chess, reversi and card games versions, there are, there is really only this Draughts program. Perhaps the game is too simple to excite programmers' attention, which would be a mistake, since Draughts is quite hard to play well. There are ten levels of play against the computer. Illegal moves refused and you are forced to take pieces by jumping if there is the option. Pieces reaching the back file opposite are automatically made into kings. Good value for money and one of the more absorbing board games.

SPORTS SIMULATION

Athletics on the computer screen may seem contrary to the vigorous nature of sport, but a number of programmers have turned their hands to simulating various sports with mixed success. At least playing them on your Spectrum is somewhat more active than watching the real thing on telly.

CHAMPIONSHIP DARTS
Producer: Shadow, 16K
Author: D Lockett
You might think a game of throwing skill would be difficult to translate into a computer game, but Shadow Software have managed very nicely in this cute and gentle game. After a fine title card, a large, traditional darts' board appears. By pressing any key you freeze a fast moving sweep line, which determines the segment your dart has hit. At the base is a cross section through the board showing the rings — double, single, treble, single, outer bull, bull. It's elegant, simple and very effective. A sensible demo/instruction mode shows you how to do it. You can select the number of points required for a game, enter the two players' names, and the program guides you through three shots in each turn. You must finish with a double or bull of course. Perhaps not exactly exciting, but a fine game and worth the money.

FOOTBALL MANAGER
Producer: Addictive Games, 48K £6.95
Author: Kevin Toms
Universally agreed as one of the best of Spectrum games of any type. This is as much strategy as simulation as you choose a team from 64 on offer, and try to work your way up from Division four to win the FA Cup. The background to the game is quite realistic, with players losing strength value and gaining it by resting a match, morale worsening with lost matches, declining crowds and resulting loss of gate money, and all the technical and strategic problems of a club manager. Having selected your team, studied the opponent's dossier, you can sit back and watch the fully animated, edited highlights of the match! An amazingly engrossing game with seven levels of play and highly recommended.

GOLF
Producer: Abrasco, 16K £6.95
For 16K users this is a very good program with quickly assembled graphics that clearly show positions of tee, green, fairways, bunkers, tree hazards and rough. There's no animated golfer as in the Virgin game, but it's made up for with clearly visible balls that follow a path of your shot. You can input



commands to use a 1 or 3 wood of given strengths, or 1-9 irons which ask wehther you want a soft or hard strike. If you pick between 7 and 9 iron, you are realistically asked whether it should be a chip shot or a pitch. When both players are on the green the screen scrolls to a close up which uses a 20 foot scale for judging the distance of the putt. The only drawback might be a tendency to crash if an incorrect variable is entered. An attractive and responsively fast game. One/two players and choose how many holes to play.

GOLF
Producer: R&R, 16K £3.75
Considering this program was available in 1982 it still stands up extremely well to some of the more recent attempts at simulating the sport. After a very short load you are asked if one or two players are taking part and whether you want a 9 hole or 18 hole game. It is only 16K so there is less sophistication in matters like choosing clubs. Your options are to select the direction using the clock face, and a strength of shot from zero to 100 — decimal points are acceptable. Each hole is generated very quickly with details of the fairway, rough, trees, bunkers, water hazards and the green. Putting is the most difficult — as it often is in real life. A very good use of colour and for 16K and the price, very good value.

GOLF
Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: David Thomson
In this version of the noble game, one to four players may take part and play between one and eighteen holes, choosing handicaps up to 28. The higher (worse) your handicap the more erratically random your shots become. There's an option on five clubs with a choice of strength between 0 and 10. When your selection has been made and you have estimated the compass point direction in which to swing, an animated golfer appears and hits the ball. Once on the green a putter is automatically selected. While fun to play there are several drawbacks. The graphics are very slow, each hole being built up character line by character line. The random quality of the handicap system undermines its value — everyone should choose a zero handicap! And the compass points are needlessly difficult as North keeps shifting direction with every hole. Worst of all Virgin have been selling the game with a glaring bug — when asked if you would like another game, there's an incorrect command in the BASIC which stops the program dead. It's easily corrected but annoying.

GOLF
Producer: Artic, 48K £5.95
Sub-titled St Andrews, this game is based on an accurate reproduction of the world famous golf course. Each hole is drawn out showing the well known details and a brief description and history is given. One or two players may take part, playing a proper game or single holes of their choice. You are asked whether you wish to use a wood or iron, strength of shot, expressed as a percentage, whether you want the shot to go straight, fade or hook, and what angle. Arriving on the green the screen cuts to a close up for the putting. The graphics are black on green and very simply drawn. The program is in BASIC so after typing in figures you ENTER, but words are accepted automatically. The temptation to enter W for wood will result in a break into program — the main drawback of an otherwise interesting game.

POOL
Producer: Abrasco, 48K £6.95
Author: K Eaves
A sudden flurry of interest in Pool makes for some interesting comparisons. One of the newer ones is this version from Abrasco for two to eight players, with the option of playing a league. As usual, the cue ball is controlled by a small cursor dot — in this case the cue ball travels towards the cursor, which is controlled by use of the cursor keys (slow and fine tuning) or the zero key for fast positioning. A very clear strength bar indicator is used to determine the distance the cue ball will travel, and is positioned with keys 5 or 8 (min/max). Considering the limitations of the Spectrum and TV screens generally, the graphics are quite good and the movement of the balls is convincingly accurate though terribly busy. Game rules are a close copy of the real game, the balls are marked as spots or stripes and you lose a turn for a foul shot. Good.

POOL
Producer: Bug-Byte, 16K £5.95
This version is unusual in that the cue ball cursor may be placed anywhere on the table, which allows for greater control over the shot. On the other hand this is not a very close copy of the real game. In addition to the cue ball, there are six

other numbered balls (you score the value of the potted ball) and each of the two players takes it turn, playing through until all the balls have been potted or he has missed three consecutive pots, or potted the cue ball. In this sense the game is a bit limited. The graphics are clear although more use of colour could have been made — all the balls are red, but much bigger than in the Abrasco version. Practice probably makes perfect, for it isn't as easy to play as it looks.

POOL

Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
Author: Mike Lamb
CDS have done very well with this version. It isn't a classic stripe or spot game. There are six balls, three red, three blue. The cursor moves round the edge of the table with key S, picking up speed as it goes. A 4-block bar indicator is used for strength of shot, a sensible arrangement where each key stroke adds a block. The graphics are very good, with neat movement and perhaps the best stopping effect of any of the pool/snooker games available. One or two player games, scoring and hi-score. Good value. Machine code.

SNOOKER

Producer: Artic, 16K £5.95
With the minimum space devoted to score lines or embellishments, Artic have produced about the biggest playing table for their game, which is a classic six colour, nine red ball. Instead of a moving cursor, the cue ball radiates a direction indicator line controlled by the cursor keys, and the strength of shot is given by using keys A to Z. The table is correctly marked with D and spots. Balls pocketed appear in a green band at the base of screen and the score is automatically kept and displayed at the base of the table. The ball colours work quite well and the movement is reasonably smooth, although the balls do stop very suddenly. Machine code.

STAR SOCCER

Producer: Watson, 16K £5.95
This is a quite different football game from Football Manager by Addictive, and is really a computer version of those old football games where you controlled your men with rods and handles. It's designed for two players, but since you need much of the keyboard, quick change overs are essential! After loading you are presented with a Super League of eight well known teams and a league scoring table. Having decided which team each is to play, the two opponents may select a playing formation; 3-2-5; 4-2-4; 4-3-3; or 4-4-2. The playing field now appears with all the numbered players of each side set up ready for the kick off. The 'players' are not animated figures, but numbererd squares, unlike the well-known Atari version. Passing the ball is done by selecting the player's number to whom you want to pass, and the game rattles along with both sides attempting to tackle, intercept and score goals. Goal kicks and corners are featured but not side throws. This is highly addictive to play — it could even be the end of football as we know it.

TEST MATCH

Producer: CRL, 48K £6.95
This game should bowl over all cricket fans (non-fans will find it all double-dutch). Fast action with no wait times makes it a speeded up version of the real thing. Participation is very limited, however; you're allowed to select the bowlers in your team and order the batsmen, but from then on the game runs itself automatically. Only in the event of a good midfield shot do you have to sit up and decide whether the bastmen should risk a run or not. In fact the odds seem pretty good since the fielders are not very accurate long shots at wicket. Features howzzats of bowled, caught, run out, lbw, and follows real cricket very closely with the exception of Australian beer cans on the pitch.



STRATEGIES

'Strategy' says the dictionary, 'is Generalship, the art of war; management of an army or armies in a campaign – art of moving or disposing troops or ships so as to impose upon the enemy the place and time and conditions for fighting preferred by oneself.' The best strategy game attempt to simulate real conditions in a wide spectrum (ahem!) of activities, and ask you to manage your forces, whether they be armies old and new, or an awkward work force. Most computer versions are lengthy games, so it's important to be able to 'save' them for another convenient time.

AIRLINE

Producer: CCS, 16/48K, £5/6.00
Start off with £3 million and turn in into £30 million and take over British Airways. Hijacks, strikes, crashes and rising fuel costs all take their toll. If you enjoy strategy games revolving around empire building, then CCS are the people for you. Clear text and illustration graphics. Good value for money.

APOCALYPSE

Producer: Red Shift, 48K £9.95
'Apocalypse' is a game of nuclear devastation. It's a long two-sided load and a game for 1-4 players. It can take between four hours and four years to play and if you outgrow the scenario, Red Shift have others to add on. A large selection of maps allows the action to take place anywhere and at almost any period. You set up the empires, their centres, their armies and weaponry. This is a very flexible game of real war strategy which should keep the addict going for a long, long time. Very good value.

AUTOCHEF

Producer: CCS, 16/48K £5/£6.00
You have a million in capital and must increase this to 25 million in the shortest possible time. The problems you must cope with include wary shareholders who are watching your every move, assessing your performance and who may even force you to resign if you're not doing well. Inflation, a sluggish economy and copious strikes are other problems you will face in this lively strategy from CCS. It's all very well eating fast food, but how fast is the money?

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Producer: Chameleon, 16K £5.50
'This is not an Arcade type game which is over in a few minutes and the only faculties to be tested are a thumb and firing finger!' it says on the inlay. Too right. The eight-part load takes about ten minutes with breaks to let you copy the various town co-ordinates and maps, without which you can do nothing, so a ZX printer is essential. And then each move, yours and the enemy's takes an age as the screen builds up the image in BASIC. The game represents the famous German thrust against the advancing Allies in World War II and claims to reproduce the German advance accurately. Your job is to try and do better than the Allies did in preventing it. One thing is certain, the real Battle of the Bulge has to have been more thrilling than this computer version, which is very badly dated.

CORN CROPPER

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Okay cornballs, time to get your hands dirty down on your 30 acre farm! There's the buying of seed crop to do, ploughing, planting, irrigating, harvesting, storing, hiring of hands, spraying the bugs and keeping an eye on the bank balance. Weather plays an important part, and as usual with these games life just isn't a doddle. Good, clear and colourful graphics.

DALLAS

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
The name of the city has become synonymous with oil and JR. The object is to take over the Ewing Empire or be taken over by them if you lose. A map of the Dallas area is divided into a grid and you are offered the option of buying up likely sites for drilling. You can do surveys before or after buying, move rigs to the site, drill, set up production and build pipe lines. The more successful you are the more likely you are to be hit by sabotage and other disasters. Oil prices fluctuate all the while, affecting your revenues. A good strategy game on the whole, although the random elements do seem to intrude too effectively.

DICTATOR

Producer: DK Tronics, 48K £4.95
One of the best early games from DK. You've just become President of Ritimba, an equatorial banana republic. Your reign will be brief and unenviable. How long can you survive your greedy and hated secret police, bullying army, irritating guerillas, bothersome commies, snot-nose landlowners and revolting peasants? Money may be borrowed from the Russians or Americans (if they feel like it). As the game progresses the options run short. Can you make it to a wealthy exile or will you die at your post? Recommended.

EVEREST ASCENT

Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
You have 20 days to reach the summit of Everest, starting off with limited funds (money comes in from sponsors if you seem to be doing well, but it isn't credited to you if you've forgotten to buy a radio). You must hire Sherpas with homely names and varying strengths and the habit of deserting you if you're not fed properly. Their equipment and supplies are expensive and they eat like horses. Neat graphics and the familiar prompt menu for buying and moving about. It takes some getting into and early expeditions usually last a short time until you realise what's needed most. A good average.

EVOLUTION

Producer: Microsphere, 48K £5.95
This is a game about the beginning of life and its development to date. You are given options as to whether life forms may evolve or not. Factors such as temperature, competition, natural disasters and environment have to be taken into account. There are two levels, an easy one which ignores cross-relationships like plants evolving before plant-eaters, and a difficult one where all the factors must be right for a life form to evolve and survive. It's an interesting and geologically accurate game and enjoyable to play. The graphics are very simple, mostly text. Rated overall at 70 percent.

GREAT BRITAIN LTD

Producer: Simon Hessel, 48K £6.95
You are Prime Minister of Great Britain and your aim is to stay in power as long as you can. Having chosen which party you wish to represent you are presented with the state of the nation, the rate of inflation, unemployment rate, exchange rate for the pound and dollar, your popularity rating, nation's balance at the bank and so on. Factors taken into account are population figures and relationship of OAPs to children, number of compnies in business, tax income from various sources, expenditure for the previous year, and the prices of commodities. The general aim is to work towards the General Election and win it. A highly complex program which takes you to the thrills of Election Night — and beyond (if you're a success). Recommended.

GENERAL ELECTION

Producer: Buy-Byte, 48K £6.95
Author: I Wason and D Wolff
The object is to win more seats in parliament than your opposition (it's a realistic simulation anyway). There are 100 constituencies split up into five regions. In each region seats are graded as Very Safe, Safe, Marginal or Very Marginal. From the title card of Maggie shouting the game's title, it's all go. Unfortunately so much of the game is a dice-throwing board game and it's beset by piles of confusing instructions as complex as an explanation of Einstein's relativity laws. In the end, rather boring to play.

INHERITANCE

Producer: Simon Hessel, 48K £6.95
This is a two part game. Great Uncle Arbuthnot is dead and you inherit his entire estate, but first you must prove your financial acumen by turning £10,000 into £100,000 in 26 weeks by investing on the stock market and the Metal Exchange. You can also gamble at the casino or at the races. Only on completing part one can you load part two; here you have got the manor house plus its ailing soft drinks factory. The aim is to find the secret formula for Paradise Cola and successfully

market the drink whilst coping with fires, strikes and frauds. The game is all text but it moves at a lively pace and is playable from the start.

JERICHO 2

Producer: Elephant, 48K £5.55
A text strategy game in which you, as Joshua, have a go at bringing down the walls of Jericho. You are provided with certain siege implements like ballistae, battering rams, towers and carts, plus 300 men. The art is to assign men to particular tasks while juggling with the necessities of building further siege engines, gathering the material for them, keeping food supplies up and attacking the weak points of the walled city. Unfed men desert — it's a tough life.

JOHNNY REB

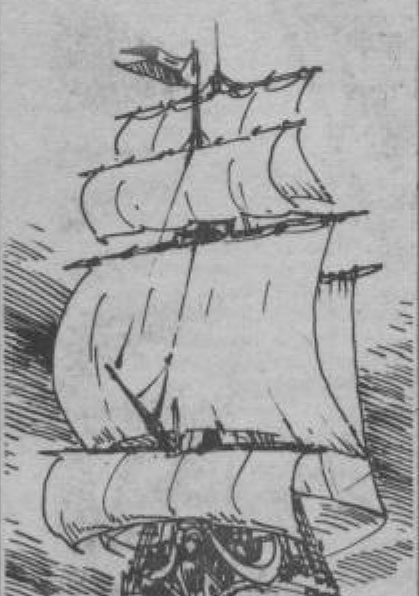
Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50
Lothlorien specialise in battle strategy war games which require hours to play properly, involving military units of varying strengths and related weaponry. Each player in turn is allowed to move some or all of his units their pre-ordained number of squares, and then use them to attack. The game is set in the American Civil War and the idea is to capture the enemy unit's flag. The graphics tend to be small to fit in everything and it takes some time to get the hang of how to play, but once that's done there's hours of fun if you like war strategy games. It has proved very popular.

PRINT SHOP

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Another standard from CCS in which you get only 12 weeks to make the profit which will stop the bank from closing down your printing business. Work scheduling, staffing, purchasing and estimating to clients for their work are aimed to test your business acumen to the hilt. Each month you receive a balance sheet to see how well you have done. This is a text game with option menus.

PRIVATEER

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £4.50
It's a good price but reflects the fact that this is an updated ZX81 program and looks like it. A 3-phase naval war game which gives you command of a Royal Navy ship fighting French Privateers. It is a suitable game for an introduction into the whole battle strategy area, but too simple for hardened veterans.



REDWEED

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50
A scenario borrowed from H G Wells puts you in charge of London's defence against the invading Martian war machines, whilst semi-sentient Redweed threatens to put your units out of action as it grows across the map. You have many and varied units from heavy artillery to flamethrowers (used against the redweed). Your enemy is three war machines and your task is to out think them. Small but effective graphics and a menu driven game where you and the Martians take your turns in a very civilised manner. Fifteen skill levels to test your tactical abilities. Good value for this popular game.

ROMAN EMPIRE

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.50
In this cast of thousands it is the first century BC and you are the Emperor. (A working knowledge of 'I Claudius' might be useful but isn't essential)! What you have to do is simply conquer ten countries which hate you, and do this wiping out their troops (under-paid and under-trained) with your 90,000 men. There are nine generals on your side, including yourself, and 18 legions of 5,000 men each. The idea is to build up armies from the men, appoint generals and launch campaigns to persuade the barbarian hordes how wonderful life under the yoke can be. Three levels of difficulty.

SAMURAI WARRIOR

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.50
You are a Samurai warrior living during the Kamakura period in Japan (1185-1333). There are no bonus points for killing Richard Chamberlain, but there are for defeating your opponents and surviving into old age. You can, of course, commit Seppuku if you would rather. Up against you are six groups of bandits and nine other samurai of differing abilities, any of whom may be superior to yourself. Challenges and hunts occur in simple graphics and are not very good. Results are in direct relation to the combatants' strengths. Seems pointless.

SHEEPWALK

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
This can't go under an 'arcade' heading and should probably be consigned to the dustbin anyway. But if anything does come into this game it is a touch of strategy and a hell of a lot of luck. The object is to get your electronic collie dog to herd a load of sheep into a pen and prevent them drowning or chomping the crops. It's all incredibly slow and tedious to play, and very BASIC.

SHIP OF THE LINE

Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
You an officer in the Royal Navy or the 17th Century, in command of a ship of the line in the Mediterranean, and the object is to do battle with other ships in order to win favour with your superiors. The ship in question is a cutter with a crew of 50. Pressing any key gives you a graphic view of the sea. If a ship is sighted you may engage her or run. Should you engage you are told the enemy's strength. If you win the encounter you may sink the ship or it may surrender, in which case you win prize money. All in all a rather simple and undemanding game with few thrills.

SMUGGLER

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Author: P A Hainsworth
The inlay says that skill, inspiration and calculated risk are the main ingredients of success. Five levels of play allow you to move and store goods, buy goods, sell them, buy a boat, sail it, and consult the bank. It is the 19th century and the object is to amass a fortune of £250,000 by smuggling goods in from the Mediterranean (avoiding Ships of the Line). Factors to juggle with include crew costs, commodity costs, port dues, maintenance costs, size of vessel and how far it can safely travel and at what loading. Random elements include the weather, which may sink your vessel or run it aground, and there are always the priates to watch out for.

TYRANT OF ATHENS

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.50
Another text strategy game from Lothlorien. It's the fifth century BC and Athens is beset by hostile armies and fleets from other powerful Greek states as well as the Persians. All you have to do is survive long enough to turn Athens into the most feared state in the Mediterranean by building warships, training troops and fighting battles by sea and by land. No mention of democracy here, and philosophy's strictly for the cissies. Not one of their best games, but reasonably playable.

WARLORD

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50
This might be seen as a sequel to 'Samurai Warrior' as it is set in the same country and the same period of time. You rule a small coastal village which supports itself by slave labour and by raiding other small villages. In turn your village may be raided by other villages or by the pirates off the coast. This is a considerably expanded game compared to 'Samurai Warrior'. Menu options allow you to train troops from your villagers, set some aside for land cultivation, hire mercenaries, attack pirates, raid other villages, hire samurai and build ships. Text only game. Average fun.

ADVENTURE GAMES

Adventure games come in all shapes and sizes. They are text-oriented, although graphics are often added, sometimes for a pretty effect, sometimes as an integral part of the game with clues not in the text. There are also an increasing number of 'graphic adventures' which combine the adventure format with arcade style graphics. They are all linked by the common theme of a quest, a search for some object or aim through many locations.

BLACK CRYSTAL

Producer: Carnell, 48K £7.50
A mammoth undertaking and one of the earliest 'big' adventures. It features graphics filling most of the screen, showing a map of the various landscapes. Choose what character you want to be and then wade in to fight the monsters. Far too complex to do justice to in this space, but if you are to play it set aside hours for contemplation of the book (or novel one might say) which explains everything. Indeed, you are recommended to save the game at various stages and think over the day's events before plunging in. Recommended.

COLOSSAL CAVES

Producer: C P Software, 48K £7.95
Author: Abersoft
Alsknown as Adventure 1 by Abersoft, this is a traditional style adventure where you must find the treasure left behind by a Wizard, and in which you will meet dragons, trolls, snakes and other dark denizens. When the program has finished loading the adventure begins instantly without instructions. These are available on command. The game is strictly text only and uses repeat locations when travelling along, say, a valley. Finding the cave in the first place is already an adventure in itself, and the whole game may take days, even weeks to complete satisfactorily. One of the classic computer adventure games. Recommended.

DEVILS OF THE DEEP

Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
A 3D graphic adventure where you move your undersea diver along the sea bed avoiding electric eels and crabs, collect useful items like harpoon guns and harpoons, knives and compasses, and try to collect the treasure hidden somewhere. There are 100 screens to be traversed. The idea is a good one but the graphics are uninspiring and very, very slow. Long load and minutes to wait if you are killed before another game may be played. Below average.

DUNGEONS OF DOOM

Producer: Temptation, 48K £5.95
This is meant to contain two games — either you enter and progress down through the dungeons, or you start at the bottom and try to get out. I thought that it was generally the case with any adventure. It's meant to be a graphic adventure, but the graphics ar restricted to black on green squares representing the room you are in and the ones near to it. Monsters appear in text only and seem dispiritingly easy to kill off. Slow responses and few thrills make this a beginners-only introduction game.

ESPIONAGE ISLAND

Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
Artic have produced five text only adventures to date, lettered A to E. This is 'D'. Despite or because of, the lack of pictures, all their adventures are dripping with verbal atmosphere. They contain endless locations, options, puzzles to solve and are never afraid of the most obscure or most obvious of solutions. Always excellent value. In this game you are on a reconnaisssance flight to spy on an enemy island when you are hit by fire. The adventure begins in the plane as it plunges earthwards. There are many tangles with the parachute before you reach the ground — just grabbing it and opening the fuselage door results in a nasty red mess on the ground! From there on you must make your way to the heart of the enemy stronghold, secure information, and return to your aircraft carrier in disguise, avoiding being shot by your own side. Biggles lives again! Clear writing and fast responses combined with a variable element in replay, make this a very worthwhile buy. Save game feature.

FAUST'S FOLLY

Producer: Abbex, 16K £5.95
Faust's Folly is buried somewhere in this congenial game with fast response times and some graphic additions. Once you have sorted out the vocab and found the entrance to the underground complex, it's a matter of the correct implements being picked up. The computer tells you that it isn't very intelligent (whatever Sinclair may tell you) and it may not know which way is which without a compass to help. In almost any location you can go in eight directions, so don't get lost. Very good for 16K.



GOLDEN APPLE

Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
Author: Simon Wadsworth
Adventure 'E' is the latest from Artic and its title card explains this text only adventure very well — a large mansion, a ship and a mountainous island in the distance. Looks easy until you start. The object is to find 13 secret objects, find a safe place to store them in and do this through tons of locations. Finding a key can be hard enough, but the key you need near the start of this game is hidden in a very obvious place — so obvious you would never think of looking there until you sneezed after sniffing the — no I musn't give any secrets away. Absorbing!

GREEDY GULCH

Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £4.95
The town of the title is a ghost town set in the Wild West, deserted now the gold workings have run out. But there is a mine out in the neighbouring desert which still has a fortune tucked away. The problem is to find the right map, get something to carry water in and fill it, find a gun for protection and then get to the mine and back. Whilst not a massively demanding adventure, it's certainly an absorbing one. The graphics show you the map of Greedy Gulch itself, or parts of it, with some location graphics in the desert. There are several mysterious appearances by someone you only see out of the corner of your eye. Some problems are simpler to overcome than you might suppose — confronted by a crevass and carrying a plank which wouldn't bridge it, jumping across solved the problem! Good value.

HOBBIT

Producer: Melbourne House, 48K £14.95
To date the great adventure, based on the famous Tolkien novel of the same name, which is included for the price. This game has a largish vocabulary and allows sentence with link words. Artificial intelligence of a kind enlivens the action as the characters continue their lives regardless of what you do. It's possible to inter-relate with them to some degree, depending on their feelings towards you. Some even get killed without you knowing about it until you stumble across their bodies! I've forgotten what the quest is, but it's hardly important — playing the game is. Very long and totally absorbing. A classic.

HUMMER HOUSE OF HORROR

Producer: Lasersound, 48K £7.00
Clouds obscure the moon and you are alone in the dreadful house — or are you? No you are not alone, there's the mad Chinese cook in the greasy kitchen for a start off, plus imps, ghouls and things that go bump in the night. Every room is seething with something or someone who wants you to pass something on to someone or something. Simple 3D graphics try to enliven the rather ponderous pace. Average fun.

INCA CURSE

Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
This is adventure 'B', well up to Artic's usual standard of text only games. You are in the South American jungle, near an, as yet, undisturbed Inca Temple. Inside there is a lot of treasure which you must find and bring safely out. Being an Indiana Jones may be of some help, but pitting your brains against the evils therein is more important. Recommended.

INVINCIBLE ISLAND

Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
Author: P Cooke
Invincible Island is the home of the primitive Xaro tribe. Legend has it (as they often will) that the Xaro guard unimaginable treasures. Your only help is the last message of world famous explorer Dr Chumley who said, 'First find the seven parchments of Xaro'. He was never heard from again. Now it's your turn. Programs from this company always seem to take an age to load. When it has you are presented with a nice clear text and neat location graphics. Reasonably fast responses.

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of Spectrum software

NEW



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Pools forecasting based upon the analysis of team performance. This is a user-friendly program that will generate or update your own database from league results and tables. Simply enter the fixtures and let your Spectrum guide you to your pools selection with 9 methods of analysis. **48K only** **£7.95**

DIGITAL Integration

Dept. CN, 22 Ash Church Road, Aldershot, Hants GU14 9LP. All prices include VAT and p&p (overseas add 55p per cassette). All cassettes carry a lifetime guarantee. Trade & export enquiries welcome — ring Dave Marshall 0252 518269. Mail order or check your local computer store.



KNIGHT'S QUEST

Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £5.95

Which Micro's reviewers got very angry about this game, because it is written in BASIC. Lots of adventure games are written in BASIC and are very good, if a little slow at times. The plot of Knight's Quest is a little thin and unoriginal however, a forerunner of their much better games. Some locations are simply illustrated with small graphics and there are the usual assortment of spells, weapons and monsters. Not all bad by any means.

MAD MARTHA

Producer: Mikrogen: 48K £6.95

To prove how much fun a BASIC written adventure can be try this little domestic ditty. As hen-pecked husband, Henry, steal your wife's money, creep out of the house without waking baby or tripping over the wailing moggy, and have a night out on the town at the casino and other similarly Unsavoury Places. The problem is that your wife, dear Martha, is an escapee from Friday the 13th Part Six 4D, a homicidal maniac with an axe! Good vocabulary and an invariable program that resembles a word maze. Getting things in absolutely the correct order is the name of the game here. But if you are too clever there are very tricky little arcade sequences included. To purists these may be upsetting, but they do liven up the adventure. If you have tried Mad Martha and enjoyed it then try ...

MAD MARTHA II

Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £6.95

Much the same mix as before, except this time Henry, Martha and son are on holiday in Spain. Martha has a half-cousin, a waiter called (wait for it) Manuel. Martha sets out on a bus tour with her son, leaving Manuel to keep an eye on Henry, who has a secret rendezvous with a Spanish penpal. Henry leaves their hotel with Manuel hot on his trail. Features a bull fight with Henry as a the star attraction. Not to be missed!

MAGIC MOUNTAIN

Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £4.95

Seek out the Scroll of Wisdom in this text adventure with location graphics. There is the usual assortment of items and monsters, baffling puzzles and sudden deaths through inexperience. Reasonable graphics and medium fast response times. An average effort.

MINES OF MORIA

Producer: Severn, 16K £4.95

The Mines of Moria are the ancient home of Durin's folk from Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. Long deserted, the mines contain old hoards of jewels and gold, guarded by the ancient and evil terrors of earlier ages. You're inside — the problem is getting out alive. Mosters include Trolls, Orcs, Balrogs or Wargs. Doors can be opened by force, spells or bribery of the door wards. Spells can be bargained for from wizards, and traders sell you wound ointment. Control is by the cursor keys, you can go up and down or use a warp which transports to other locations on a random floor. Watch out for the two-part load. The game itself is a mix. The screen shows you a plan of the floor with a list which lets you know the level you are on and room number occupied, weaponry and armorial status, number of wounds, strength, gold collected, jewels collected and spells available. A line at the bottom informs you of what's going on and asks whether or not to fight on meeting monsters. Room visited are plotted on the map, showing monsters encountered. It becomes difficult to manoeuvre after a while. A reasonable game.

MINES OF SATURN

Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95

Includes part two — Return to Earth. You're making a routine orbit of Saturn when a radiation storm forces you to crash land on one of the moons. Luckily you come down near an abandoned mining base. Now you must set off in search of Di-Lithium crystals to refuel your standard ship. 'Return to Earth' gets you back in space and landing on an abandoned and damaged space station, looking for a means of communicating with Earth. Both adventures are very standard, with not many locations and irritating random elements over which you have no control. The games lack atmosphere and will not accept abbreviations making you type everything out. Tedious.

PHARAOH'S TOMB

Producer: Phipps Associates: 48K £4.95

Make yourself rich by plundering a luxurious Pharaoh's tomb. Phipps have put together a well planned and sometimes amusing adventure game here, with text and location graphics, which are simply but attractive. Responses are very fast and the atmosphere draws you in again and again. Good value for money and well worth playing.

PIMANIA

Producer: Automata, 48K £10.00

There's not much to be said about Pimania, the game that launched overnight the insignificant Pi Man to fame and fortune. The game is wacky, daft, weird and infuriating by turns and to date the famous prize worth £6,000 (plus index linking) has not been won. Although it runs on standard adventure game lines it takes lateral thinking into the realms of higher (or perhaps camp) art. Slow responses but that hardly matters, Pimania is a disease which overcomes most things!

PLANET OF DEATH

Producer: Artic, 16K £6.95

Adventure 'A' finds you stranded on an alien planet and you must find your space ship. That's a pretty straightforward quest for once, but the route is far from straightforward. Atmospheric and chilling to play, you get drawn in by the words. Plenty of hazards to overcome. Good value.

QUEST

Producer: Hewson, 48K £5.95

Find a map hidden in a world inhabited by gruesome monsters guarding their territory and various pieces of treasure. To undertake the quest in question you can choose to be a wizard, a cleric, rogue, fighter or simpleton, each with his own characteristics and abilities. A split text/graphic game, it has a reasonably wide range of vocabulary. Generally a very good game and a traditional format adventure with plenty of scope. The only serious drawback is that you can't play another game. Once finished the program quits permanently.

SHIP OF DOOM

Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95

Adventure 'C' takes you into space and on a reconnaissance trip your ship is drawn by a Graviton beam onto an alien cruiser. Fred, your pet android, informs you that the cruiser is in search of humanoid planets to capture slaves whose brains will be replaced by microchips. The quest is to find the computer room and press the button to switch it off. You want to be wary in an Artic adventure, however, of switching off too many computers should you come across them. In 'Planet of Death' there is a computer which you may be tempted to disconnect. Doing so will dump you into a Sinclair Research logo!

SMUGGLER'S COVE

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95

It's 1753 and you are on a hunt for Blackbeard's famous treasure, hidden in a complex of caves on the north Cornish Coast. The program burbles away at you in pirateese of the 'Argh, Jim lad, me scupper, there 'e be,' type. The top half of the screen contains well designed and instantly appearing location graphics, but the game gets nowhere. It seems impossible to get beyond the first few locations and then it ceases to be any fun.

SPECTRUM SAFARI

Producer: A J Rushton, 48K £5.95

I've been told that this game is now marketed by C D S Micro Systems. In any event it is a jolly and original mixture of arcade bits with text/graphics adventure which should keep you on your toes unless you're a D&D purist. The idea is to take your party of stranded explorers across an island infested with highly intelligent wildlife with university degrees, and beset with natives who want to barter away their food and men to replace that eaten by the men or the intelligent wildlife. Once you have visited a village it disappears forever, presumably wiped out through lack of resistance to some vile white man's disease, but it teaches you caution in your bargaining, if you're getting short of explorers (lives) in your party. Losing them all means death to the player. The main object is to find the only boat, buy it and sail away from this Magnus Magnusson madhouse. Every animal encountered has some problem for you; sometimes its an arcade style situation, sometimes they want to know the answer to a difficult mathematical problem. If you fail a member of your party gets eaten. Nice clear graphics and a veritable MGM musical score makes this a very enjoyable game. Recommended.

SUPER SPY

Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50

Cross and recross the world in search of Dr Death's secret island lair. Full of coded messages and puzzles, mysterious packages, waitresses, hotel managers, taxi cab drivers and the like. Be wary of parcels and flowers that explode and watch out for Dr Death's horrid little midget. It could be a lively and fun game to play, but in the end it settles for mere confusion which tends to wear the player down. If you like this type of game, probably worth it.

VELNOR'S LAIR

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
Author: Derek Brewster

No adventure anthology would be complete without this one. Text only, but fluid, copious text with fast response times and a sense of humour that takes some of the sting from the gruesome tale of terror which lurks within the complex of Velnor's Lair. There's a clever use of repeat locations which makes you think you aren't getting anywhere, when in fact you must keep entering the same command for five or six steps. The denizens of this adventure are a monstrous lot, and the goblins are tricky indeed. Chose your character carefully, wizard, warrior or priest, and watch out for illusions, which abound. Highly recommended.

THE SOFTWARE GUIDE THAT EXPANDS EVERY MONTH





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ANY OF THE SOFTWARE REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE* OF CRASH MAGAZINE MAY BE ORDERED BY MAIL USING THE FORM BELOW.

*In the case of very new programmes which may not be available from the software producer yet, it is advisable to ring first and check on availability.

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VOTE FOR THE CHARTS!

CRASH HOTLINE



This is your opportunity to help create an entirely new **Top 20** chart of Spectrum software. There are two ways you can do it; either use the **Crash Hotline Phone-in** (the phone number is below); or use the coupon at the bottom of this page and send it to us.

Each month the results of your votes will be collated and published in the next month's issue of **CRASH** as the **Top 20** programs voted on by readers.

The most important aspects of the **CRASH HOTLINE TOP 20** is that it will **not** be based only on sales figures, as other charts are, which we hope will give many excellent games a chance even though they may not be on sale in the bigger chain stores. At present the top selling charts rely entirely on sales made in the big chain stores, which do not sell all the games available.

SO YOUR VOTE IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT — USE IT PLEASE!

HOW TO USE THE CRASH HOTLINE

Method 1

CRASH HOTLINE PHONE-IN. All you have to do is ring the number below any time between 9am and 7pm (Mon-Sat) and ask for the Hotline. You will then be asked for your name and address followed by the titles of the five games you wish to nominate in order of preference.

THE CRASH HOTLINE PHONE NUMBER IS 0584 (Ludlow) 3015

Method 2

CRASH HOTLINE WRITE IN. Use the coupon below, making sure you fill in your name and address clearly, and list your five favourite programs in correct, descending order. Then pop the coupon in a stamped envelope and send it to: **CRASH HOTLINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.**

DEADLINE

Votes for the next issue of **CRASH** must be received no later than the Wednesday 1 February. Votes received after that date will go forward to the following month's issue.

Whether you phone-in or write in, all the names will go into the bag to be drawn monthly. First out of the bag receives £10 worth of software of your choice plus three issues of CRASH for the next three months; and three runners-up will each receive three free issues of CRASH for the next three months. (Should you be a subscriber, then your subscription will be extended for three months).

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

As the *CRASH HOTLINE* hasn't had a chance to make up a chart yet, we provide here a list of the 50 top selling programs between September and the end of November, based on mail order sales. As the chart is taken from a far wider range than most retail outlets stock there are, as you might suppose, some surprises. No prizes, however, for guessing the number one game — Imagine's *ZZOOM* has swept the board, selling twice as much as its nearest competitor. Watch out in the next issue for the *CRASH HOTLINE* — the top games as selected by you...

1 **ZZOOM** *Imagine*
2 **KILLER KONG** *Blaby*
3 **3D COMBAT ZONE** *Artic*
4 **JETPAC** *Ultimate*
5 **PENETRATOR** *Melbourne*
6 **TRANZ AM** *Ultimate*
7 **JOHNNY REB** *Lothlorien*
8 **TURBO DRIVER** *Boss UK*
9 **TERROR DAKTIL** *4D Melbourne House*
10 **LUNAR JETMAN** *Ultimate*
11 **MAZE DEATH RACE** *P.S.S*
12 **ZIP ZAP** *Imagine*
13 **MAD MARTHA** *Mikrogen*
14 **ATIC ATAC** *Ultimate*
15 **STAR TREK** *Neptune*
16 **VALHALLA** *Legend*
17 **DO DO** *Blaby*
18 **AIRLINER** *Protek*
19 **OSTRON** *Softek*
20 **ARCADIA** *Imagine*
21 **3D TANX** *DK Tronics*
22 **RAIDER OF THE CURSED MINE** *Arcade*
23 **MANIC MINER** *Bug-Byte*
24 **TRADER** *Quicksilva*
25 **COOKIE** *Ultimate*
26 **GALAXIANS** *Artic*
27 **VELNOR'S LAIR** *Quicksilva*
28 **HALL OF THE THINGS** *Crystal*
29 **REDWEED** *Lothlorien*
30 **TIMEGATE** *Quicksilva*
31 **FROGGY** *D.J.L.*
32 **BARMY BURGERS** *Blaby*
33 **THE HOBBIT** *Melbourne House*
34 **FIREBIRDS** *Softek*
35 **PSSST** *Ultimate*
36 **DO NOT PASS GO** *Workforce*
37 **3D ANT ATTACK** *Quicksilva*
38 **3D TUNNEL** *New Generation*
39 **SHADOWFAX** *Postern*
40 **STARSHIP ENTERPRISE** *Silversoft*
41 **GROUND ATTACK** *Silversoft*
42 **AH DIDDUMS** *Imagine*
43 **COSMIC RAIDERS** *Mikrogen*
44 **GOLF** *Virgin Games*
45 **WIZARD'S WARRIORS** *Abersoft*
46 **JUMPING JACK** *Imagine*
47 **COSMIC DEBRIS** *Artic*
48 **SPECTRUM SAFARI** *A.J.Rushton*
49 **LIGHT CYCLE** *P.S.S.*
50 **GOLDMINE** *DK Tronics*

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My top five favourite programs in descending order are:

TITLE	PRODUCER
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



BE ONE OF THREE PEOPLE TO WIN SOFTWARE! THE MONTHLY CRASH QUIZ



Writing cassette inlay blurbs is growing into an Art Form! We're all used to the obscure 'story line' by now, but just how much notice do you really take of them? To find out we have devised a simple little quiz for you based around arcade game inlay cards.

All you have to do is answer all the questions correctly and send them to us on a postcard or in a letter to this address:

CRASH MICRO QUIZ, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB

Entries must be received at the latest by second post on **Friday 17 February.** The first three correct entires drawn from the bag will each receive £25 worth of software of their choice, and the results and quiz answers will appear in April's issue

1) In which game would you expect to see a Thyrgodian Megga Chrisanthodil?
2) Who was the Manic Miner?
3) And where was the mine situated?
4) Name the famous 'Book' in which the Forts of Falnon are mentioned, and in which the Xxkraan Raiders appear.
5) Name the three games in which the Forts of Falnon and/or the Xxkraan Raiders appear.
6) Henry and his son Arbuthnot have appeared twice. Where?
7) If you've just fought a bloody battle across the Plains of Lacenta, where have you been?
8) Colonel Custard made a guest appearance in what game?
9) Where would you come across the DK menace?
10) Blue Bearers, Green Chasers, Red Knaves and Dark Knights all confront you in what game?
11) And for a bonus point, what was the game's original name?
12) If you are trapped on the planet of Bovryll, where are you?
13) Bill the Worm appeared in many well known films like 'Worm Kong', 'Worm of Dracula', and what well known game?
14) If you're about to be Bogulised, where are you?

LOOK OUT FOR NEXT MONTH'S QUIZ ON ADVENTURE GAMES!

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-an Xxkraan Raider

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WIN £100 IN SOFTWARE

AND BECOME A REGULAR GAMES REVIEWER FOR CRASH MAGAZINE!

Yes, we all know what it's like to read those reviews of new games (usually a couple of months after we actually bought the game) and fume because the critic slagged the program when we thought it was pretty triff, or said it was marvellous when we all thought it was a load of cobblers.

So here's your chance to put the record straight! Think you can do any better? If you think you can, then CRASH has the competition for you.

We're looking for reviewers to contribute on a regular basis to the columns of **CRASH**. An important principle of our reviews is that they should be done by at least three people, so that the program and the readers get a fair and balanced report. With the quantity of games appearing at the moment, it means we need quite a few reviewers — **and you could be one of them!**

All you have to do is pick **three programs** from the list below and write a full scale review of not less than 500 words, and not more than 900 words. We have provided a wide choice of programs so that you should already have had a chance of seeing them. You can pick games from any of the categories or just concentrate on a single category (like Adventure for instance). But bear in mind that we are looking for reviewers who can specialise in the various categories.

We are **not** looking for star ratings or points out of ten, but details like graphics, presentation, animation, use of colour and sound **should** be included; whether the game was hard to play using just the keyboard, whether the instructions were on the inlay care or on the game itself and whether or not they were clear to understand. A judgement on whether the program was good value for money should also be included.

We would prefer entries to be typed if possible, but if you don't have access to a typewriter please make sure your handwriting is legible. Entries will not be judged on spelling, although it's obviously important to be literate.

Entries should be received by **Friday 24 February 1984** latest and the results will be printed in the April issue. Entries can only be returned if accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

CRASH REVIEWERS COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

All entries must be accompanied by this form (you may photocopy it if you do not wish to cut it out). Please write your name and address in block capitals, and fill in your three choices for review.

Name ....

Address ....

....

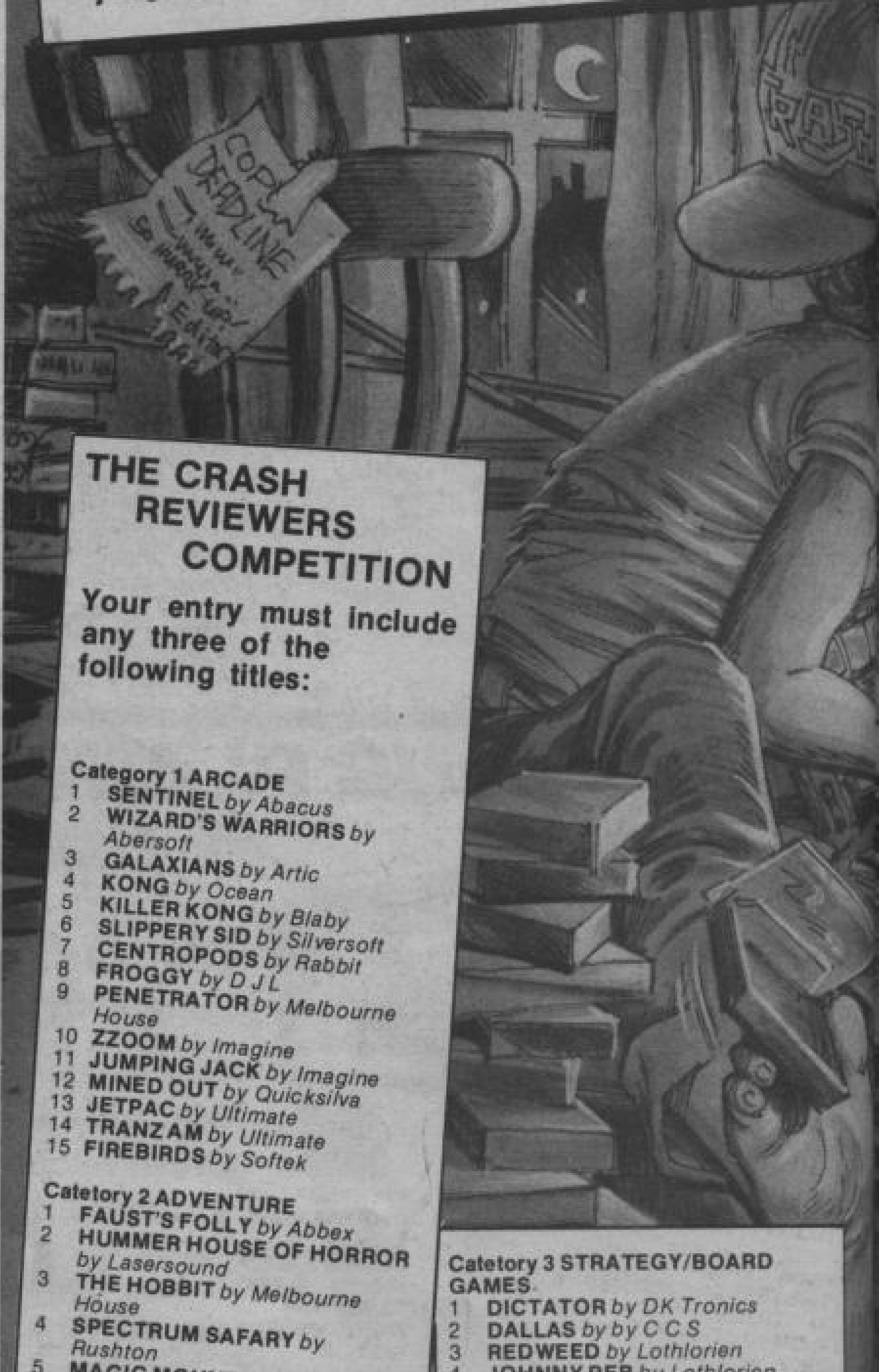
postcode ....

Titles reviewed	Software Producer
1 KONG	OCEAN
2 JETPAC	ULTIMATE.
3	

Send your reviews together with the entry form to:
CRASH REVIEWERS COMPETITION, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB

PRIZES

The outright winner will receive £100 worth of software, and the five runners-up will each receive £20 worth of software. In addition, the six winners will be invited to become regular program reviewers for CRASH from then on. In judging the entries, the Editor's decision is final.



THE CRASH REVIEWERS COMPETITION

Your entry must include any three of the following titles:

Category 1 ARCADE
1. **SENTINEL** *by Abacus*
2. **WIZARD'S WARRIORS** *by Abersoft*
3. **GALAXIANS** *by Artic*
4. **KONG** *by Ocean*
5. **KILLER KONG** *by Blaby*
6. **SLIPPERY SID** *by Silversoft*
7. **CENTROPODS** *by Rabbit*
8. **FROGGY** *by D J L*
9. **PENETRATOR** *by Melbourne House*
10. **ZZOOM** *by Imagine*
11. **JUMPING JACK** *by Imagine*
12. **MINED OUT** *by Quicksilva*
13. **JETPAC** *by Ultimate*
14. **TRANZ AM** *by Ultimate*
15. **FIREBIRDS** *by Softek*

Catetory 2 ADVENTURE
1. **FAUST'S FOLLY** *by Abbex*
2. **HUMMER HOUSE OF HORROR** *by Lasersound*
3. **THE HOBBIT** *by Melbourne House*
4. **SPECTRUM SAFARY** *by Rushton*
5. **MAGIC MOUNTAIN** *by Phipps Assoc.*
6. **GREEDY GULCH** *by Phipps Assoc.*
7. **MAD MARTHA** *by Mikrogen*
8. **VELNOR'S LAIR** *by Quicksilva*
9. **SMUGGLER'S COVE** *by Quicksilva*
10. **PLANET OF DEATH** *by Artic*
11. **INCA CURSE** *by Artic*
12. **VOLCANIC DUNGEON** *by Carnell*
13. **DUNGEONS OF DOOM** *by Temptation*
14. **QUEST** *by Hewson*
15. **MAGIC CASTLE** *by Gilsoft*

Catetory 3 STRATEGY/BOARD GAMES
1. **DICTATOR** *by DK Tronics*
2. **DALLAS** *by by C C S*
3. **REDWEED** *by Lothlorien*
4. **JOHNNY REB** *by Lothlorien*
5. **EVEREST ASCENT** *by Shepherd*
6. **DO NOT PASS GO** *by Workforce*
7. **3D STRATEGY** *by Quicksilva*
8. **ZX DRAUGHTS** *by CP Software*
9. **(any) CHESS PROG** *by Artic*
10. **CYRUS-IS-CHESS** *by Intelligent Software*
11. **FOOTBALL MANAGER** *by Addictive*
12. **GREAT BRITAIN LTD** *by Mikrogen*
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2 **FLIGHT SIMULATION** *by Psion*
3 **AIRLINER** *by Protek*
4 **HEATHROW ATC** *by Hewson*

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1 **EASYSPEAK** *by Quicksilva*
2 **M-CODER** *by PSS*
3 **COMPILER** *by PSS*
4 **DEVPAC** *by Hisoft*
5 **COMPILER** *by Softek*
6 **AM-ZX EDIT** *by Amersham*
7 **ASSEMBLER** *by Artic*
8 **THE QUILL** *by Gilsoft*
9 **SOFTALK I (or) II** *by CP Software*
10 **SOUND FX** *by DK Tronics*
11 **ZXED (TOOLKIT)** *by DK Tronics*
12 **GRAPHICS CREATOR** *by Llamasoft*
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15 **48K MELBOURNE DRAW** *by Melbourne House*

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6 **INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH 2** *by Rose*
7 **QUAZER** *by Rose*
8 **FRENCH REVISION** *by Rose*
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10 **GEOGRAPHY 1** *by Sinclair*
11 **INVENTIONS 1** *by Sinclair*
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ROGER KEAN discovers that the games warrens are full of Rabbits – and they're breeding fast!

BRER RABBIT



MEET ROLAND ...

With the games software revolution recovering from its Christmas hype it is easy to forget just how short a time ago the whole thing started. After all, many of the better known software houses were only formed 8 to 10 months ago which makes **RABBIT** a granddaddy, having now clocked up almost two years in the business. The company's mascot is director Heather Lamont's cuddly toy, Roland Rabbit, whose floppy-eared form adorns the distintive red cassette boxes which have long been familiar to Vic-20 owners.

'We quickly became well-known for our Vic-20 and Commodore 64 games' **John Willan**, Rabbit's Sales manager, told me 'but we're less well known for the Spectrum.'

Rabbit recognised the potential of the Spectrum and began producing games for it three months ago. The six titles have sold very well, but their low advertising profile means they are not as visible as many other software houses. 'The Spectrum programs are very good and we should be known for them,' John added. Nevertheless, Heather Lamont reckons they sell 60,000 cassettes a month during the low summer season, a figure undoubtedly improved over Christmas.

ROLAND GROWS UP ...

Rabbit started life as an offshoot of **Cream Computers,** a shop in Harrow (North London) that specialised in business micros. One of the employees wrote software, and it was the time when personal computer games were in their infancy. It seemed like a good idea to sell some games by mail order. It was.

'We started off doing our own duplicating,' said John, 'with very basic packaging — cream coloured paper with a rabbit stamped on it and hand written details.' The idea took off, coinciding with the buzz about the Vic-20 and soon Cream had to start thinking seriously about their young Rabbit.

The first thing was to realise that computer games were going to be big business for shops, something the chain stores were relunctant to recognise initially. Rabbit hired in a tele-sales team and began zapping away. The results were encouraging, to say the least, which is why their games are now available from all good computer outlets, Smiths, Menzies, Boots, Laskys, Martins, Rumbelows and Greens of Debenhams to name a few.

'The Spectrum programs are very good and we should be known for them ...'

The second step was to improve their marketing. 'We learn't a lot from our dealings with people like Boots and Lasky's,' said John. 'In fact the talks we had helped both sides towards retail of software.'

Rabbit now has less dealings with the public direct, preferring to concentrate on helping the retailer sell the product through production of posters, stickers and an excellent all-colour catalogue. The packaging of the cassettes has improved radically too, with colour artwork on the inlays and the whole cassette sold inside a larger red box stamped with the Rabbit logo. The marketing exercise is all aimed to build up a name for high quality programs.

ROLAND GOES TO TOWN

Although they wrote their own software in the early days, Rabbit no longer has in-house programmers, but they do have several under contract with whom they keep in close contact. **Terry Grant** is the software producer/director. His task is to think up the ideas and work with the programmers. He decides on details like skill levels and character definition, and generally oversees production. He seems very young to hold such a responsible position but then, this is a young business, run by young people, and encouraging young people where it can. Their early success in selling games resulted in floods of programs from young hopefuls.

'We still get several programs a week sent in' Terry told me. 'We help the writers along, even if the programs are outdated in concept.

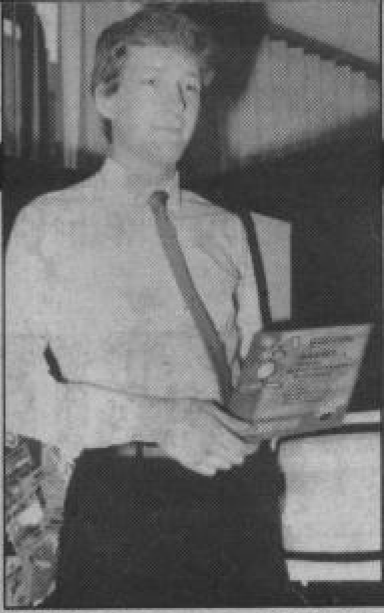
A problem is that a lot are written in basic and need compiling to speed them up.' Rabbit help in this way, and sometimes a saleable game comes out of the effort.

The rsults, as far as Spectrum games go, is impressive — six games in a short space of time. There is the fiendishly mean *ESCAPE MCP* where you are pitted against the micro processor of your Spectrum, lost in the circuits and trying to evade capture; the road race game *RACE FUN;* a 'galaxian' style game called *PHANTASIA;* their excellent version of *FROGGER;* a particularly fast creepie-crawlie *CENTROPODS;* and the quirky *QUACKERS* — a fair ground duck shoot. These six have been joined by further games since Christmas.

'The main thing,' John firmly told me 'is to have an original program. Originality is the way the market is going.' But originality comes to nothing if the product is not available for sale and duplication of tapes is the biggest headache at the moment. Chain stores are getting very worried about the situation because after accepting a title they are finding that the software producer has difficulty in maintaining stocks. Heather Lamont and John Willan have now formed a new company called **Copy-Soft**. The two directors have invested large sums of money in the latest American high quality duplicating equipment. Copy-Soft is quite separate from Rabbit and will offer a full scale service to all software houses, including inlay design and printing, right through to bulk copying and delivery. Rabbit won't receive preferential treatment it seems, but it must be nice for Copy-Soft to know



Heather Lamont and the company mascot, **Roland** the Rabbit.



Rabbit's sales manager, **John Willan.**



Terry Grant — responsible for overseeing Rabbit's programmers.

they'll be handling at least 60,000 cassettes a month right off!

ROLAND LOOKS TO THE FUTURE ...

Rabbit may be a grandaddy, but it is looking forward to a long future in a business which is barely beginning yet. New plans for future promotions are in the pipeline. But I wondered what John thought of the **Prism** plans for distributing software direct through the telephone lines to high street outlets like Rumbelows. 'The software houses won't allow it,' he said immediately and then added, 'and I wouldn't want to stay in this business if it happened.'

He feels that Prism have overlooked the fact that games players want to keep the programs they buy. The Romox system Prism wants to use was tried in America — and it failed, John maintains. Part of the problem is that you buy a game and then take the cassette back later to have it over-recorded with another program, which means you can't 'revisit' a game later without paying again. Another problem is the simple fact that software houses have worked hard to create an identity for themselves through their cassette inlays, and with the Prism system all you get is a blank cassette.



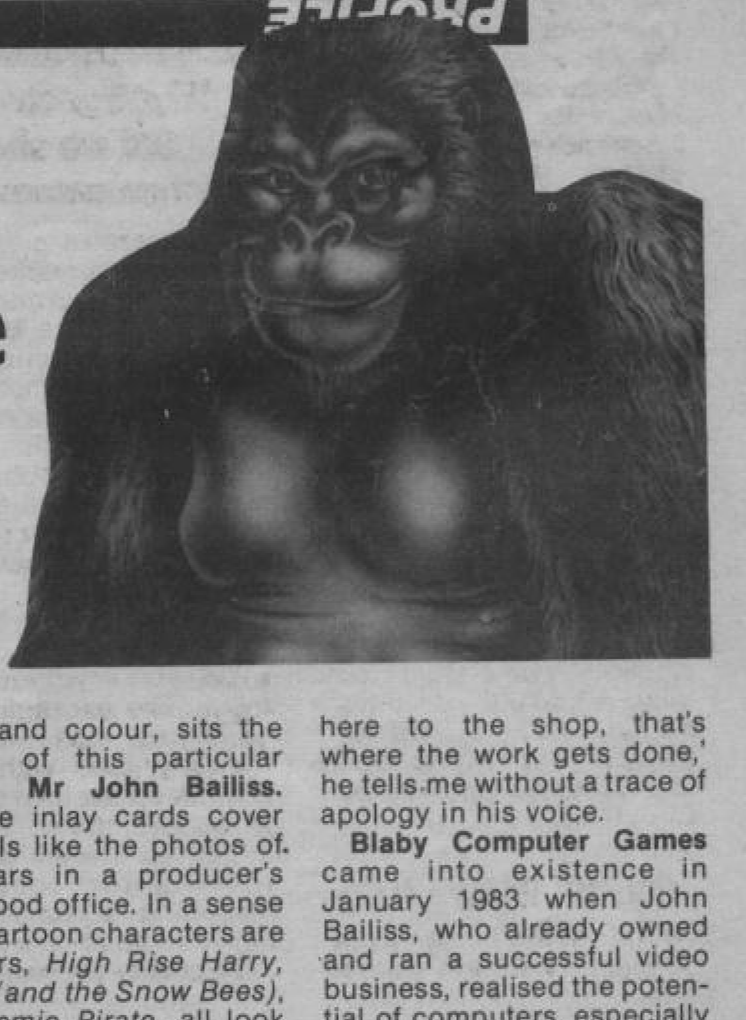
'Originality is the way the market is going.'

John Willan, Heather Lamont, Terry Grant and Roland Rabbit think that the customer's best protection from second-rate games is to buy from software houses they know. At the moment the best guarantee of quality is provided by the entire packaging of a game. It seems natural that software houses who care about their product should want customers to know who made the game.

Meanwhile, Rabbit are looking towards new warrens to conquer.

PROFILE

A Wild Ape in Leicestershire



LLOYD MANGRAM travels to the wilds of Leicestershire and discovers a Killer Kong on the loose in the quiet town of BLABY.

When you arrive at its small centre, the town of Blaby seems to be little more than an undistinguished suburb of Leicester. Yet at the very centre, on a corner of the crossroads, is a white-fronted shop bearing the legend **Blaby Video & Computer Games.** Outside it all looks normal and respectable. Inside is another world, for it is from this building that *Killer Kong* and *Barmy Burgers* were released on an unsuspecting world.

As you pass through the door, the everyday noises of traffic and chattering pedestrians are replaced by the beeps and gurgles of computer games. One half of the shop is all video, the back half is given over to games for a wide variety of computers. It's hard to distinguish between customer and sales lads, since both appear to crowd onto the counter to get a better look at the screens.

In a remarkably tiny office behind this cacophony of sound and colour, sits the warden of this particular asylum, **Mr John Bailiss.** Cassette inlay cards cover the walls like the photos of film stars in a producer's Hollywood office. In a sense these cartoon characters are the stars, *High Rise Harry*, *Do Do (and the Snow Bees)*, the *Kosmic Pirate*, all look down on me as I find a place to sit amid the heaps of cassette boxes. John sweeps them aside for me and a seat becomes visible.

'We devote all the space here to the shop, that's where the work gets done,' he tells me without a trace of apology in his voice.

Blaby Computer Games came into existence in January 1983 when John Bailiss, who already owned and ran a successful video business, realised the potential of computers, especially the ZX Spectrum. At the time there were few other companies in the field, producing games for the Spectrum, and it seemed like a good idea. Two young enthusiasts, 16-

year-old Gary Sewell and Gary Casewell submitted their ideas for John to market, and the result was three games, *Gold Digger*, *Confusion* and the popular *Chopper Rescue*.

'Admittedly it was the wrong time of year as the summer was nearly upon us,' he says, looking back on the worst year yet for the computer business. Hot and long summers are always bad for software.

But with a further six games on the verge of completion the young company ploughed through the holiday period. 'We placed advertisements in all the popular computer magazines throughout the summer months and soon enquiries started to come in from home and abroad.'

Blaby was one of the first software producers, to my knowledge, to make up a video cassette with all the games being played on it. The video was well produced, showed the games, sheet by sheet, very well and above all, allowed the sound to be heard at volume. On seeing this video for the first time I was astonished at the graphics, sound and games. There seemed to be so many and yet they were not appearing in any top selling charts. In the space of only a few months that has all changed.

'Our games are now being produced under license in Iceland, Denmark, Spain, Austria and Holland,' John says with evident satisfaction. 'And *Barmy Burgers* has just been accepted by W H Smith. We hope it's the first of many of our games.'

Blaby now has a distribution network throughout the UK and mail order is taken care of from their shop.

The first serious hint of interest from the home market came at the 8th ZX Micro Fair at Alexandra Palace towards the end of the summer holidays, when over 7,000 people crammed into the sweltering heat of the plastic pavilion in one day. Blaby had a large stand, packed with screens showing the various games. It was hard to move about anywhere within the exhibition area, but around the Blaby stand it was impossible. *Barmy Burgers* and *Killer Kong* were going through their paces non-stop.

'That was a huge success,' John reflects happily. 'We had lots of orders and enquiries from home and overseas.' It was also fulfilment because in one place the public were echoing the praise of several good reviews for the games. In my own humble opinion, *Barmy Burgers* is as good as its arcade counterpart, better than the Atari version, while *Killer Kong* is undoubtedly the best Kong game for the Spectrum. *High Rise Harry* is an amusing and very difficult painter game, and an earlier success, *Chopper Rescue* is still among the most difficult games available in Spectrum software.



Games available from Blaby
Do Do (and the Snow Bees)
Killer Kong
Barmy Burgers
Kosmic Pirate
High Rise Harry
Chopper Rescue
Gold Digger
Shuttle
Confusion
Gotcha
Pluggit

'New games are always in the pipeline. We work very closely with the team of programmers, some of whom live locally. In fact, they sometimes work in the shop behind the sales counter.' Or even **on** the sales counter if it's crowded, I remark.

The two latest Blaby games are *Gotcha* and *Pluggit*. *Gotcha!*, a cops and robbers game is described as extremely tricky and not for beginners, and *Pluggit* has a lost IC chip trying to get back to his socket deep inside 'Uncle Clive's' computer. (Both games are reviewed in this issue). The exploits of robber Ernie and the IC chip proved very popular with the crowds at the 9th ZX Microfair in December.

The company is now busy at work on new games for early this year and John tells me that before long their programs will be available on micro drive and ROM cartridges.

Meanwhile, all attempts to cage the *Killer Kong* appear to have failed — it's eating all those *Barmy Burgers* that drive him wild. He'll be content with nothing less than world domination of the Spectrum software market and he seems to be dragging the willing Blaby games along with him.



Barmy Burgers is available at W H Smith. All games may be purchased from **Blaby Games, Crossways House, Lutterworth Road, Blaby, Leicester,** or from **Crash Micro Mail Order**, and many other computer outlets.

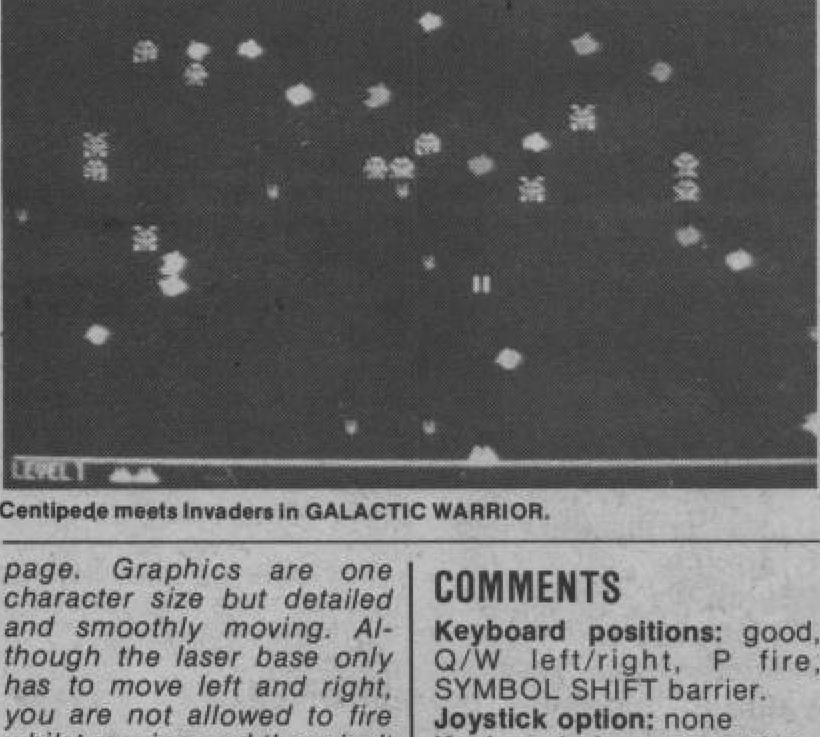
GALACTIC WARRIORS

Producer: **Abacus**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Michael Lee**

Galactic Warriors follows a familiar scenario; alien hordes threaten the galaxy, your mission is to save the Earth by manning three laser bases (by which they mean you have three lives of course). The aliens will not risk their big cruisers against you, so instead they release a load of attack craft, armed with missiles.

As a game type this could be said to be Centipede as a Space Invader. The mother ship zips across the top of the screen spewing out the little green attack craft in a ragged line. Their major obstacle is all the space debris dotted about at random, asteroids in fact, which replace the centipedal mushroom forest. If an attack craft touches one it changes direction. So the line of aliens zig zag down the screen, their line gradually breaking into individual segments, until they reach the bottom and your laser base.

As in centipede games you can shoot away the asteroids. There are two types, magenta ones and red ones. The magenta require two shots and the red only need one. When you hit an attack craft it turns into a magenta obstacle. Additionally, the alien missiles also destroy the asteroids. Apart from your laser the base is equipped with a force barrier but when this is employed you are not allowed to fire the laster otherwise you blow up. The barrier is effective against contact with an alien.



Centipede meets Invaders in GALACTIC WARRIOR.

CRITICISM

'This is a well presented game with good instructions. In fact it's an updated Space Invader type. The graphics are good and so is the sound, but the colours could have been brighter.'

'The "Attract Mode" is well thought out, cycling automatically through the points table, game demo, Hall of Fame and back to the title page. Graphics are one character size but detailed and smoothly moving. Although the laser base only has to move left and right, you are not allowed to fire whilst moving and there isn't a continuous fire. Lack of continuous fire is no problem but I would have preferred to be able to move and fire at the same time. A good game with loads of playability.'

'The whole presentation is very effective, everything organised just as if it were on an arcade machine. Good colours, lots of sound and fast moving at all three speeds. The tunes played between each life are long and could get irritating, but they seem to have thought of everything, pressing ENTER stops the tune dead and gets the game moving again.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: good, Q/W left/right, P fire, SYMBOL SHIFT barrier.
Joystick option: none
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: mixed reception, two approved, one didn't
Graphics: good
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 3
Lives: 3
General rating: good

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	65%
Playability	70%
Getting started	73%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	65%
Overall	67%

GANGSTERS!

Producer: **CCS**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.00**
Language: **BASIC**
Author: **P Boulton**

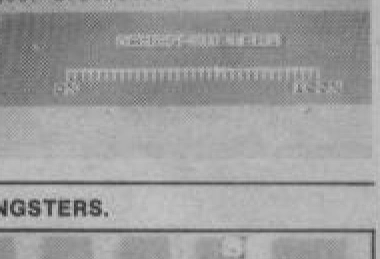
As their name suggests, **Cases Computer Simulations (CCS) specialise in simulation and strategy games. They had two hits with** *Dallas* and *Corn Cropper* during 1983, and are now following up with a number of original ideas based around the notion of turning *some* money into **lots** of money. *Gangsters!* is set in the heyday of Al Capone, but the Windy City is now called Spectral City.

After a lively title page of splattered gunshots you are shown a grid of the city with the various joints of four rival gangs marked on it. The gangs, identified by the colours blue, red, magenta and green, each have a selection of Speakeasies, Distilleries, Casinos and Brothels. They also have gansters in varying numbers, and the gang as a whole has a morale value which dips or rises as the gang's fortunes go up and down.

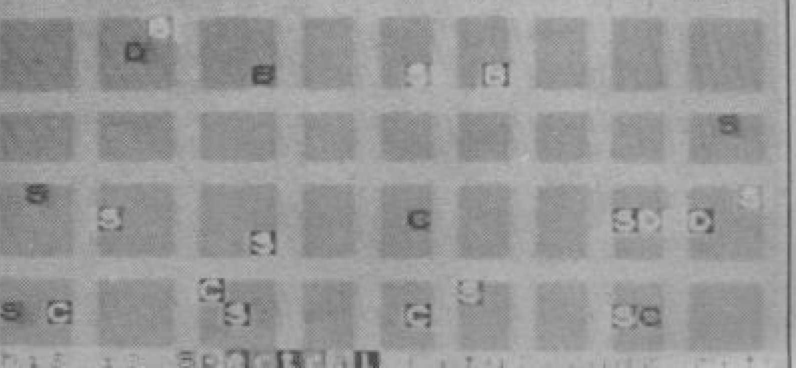
After selecting a skill level (which dictates how much money you will be given at the start), you're shown the Gang Strengths Summary. This tells you how many joints they own and how much money they have banked. Depending on the level of play chosen, your money appears at the bottom. You may then buy up casinos, distilleries etc., followed by the number of gangsters you want and a personal protection factor to help prevent anyone bumping you off. It's worth setting this quite high!

Now the game really starts, following the customary pattern of strategy games, where you are offered a stream of unenviable decisions; there's The Thorny Question of Bribes, which lets you keep the risk of arrest to a minimum, or have a go at shopping a rival gang member; there's Raid Rivals assets in which you select the gang to be raided and then use the cursor keys on the map to select the gang to be raided and their particular joint, and the number of gangsters you are going to take. The report shows the percentage of damage done and the cost of the repairs to the rival gang. Of course if you do raid someone, they're as likely to raid back and cost you. You can also opt to murder a gang leader, in which case a menu of five killers and their rate for the job appear (avoid Bugsy Spitoone—he's expensive and incompetent!) Now and again the law has a go at you by arresting one of the gang.

I think I'm about to lose a Brothel...



Spectral City, divided up between the GANGSTERS.



You can have a go at bribing the Attorney or the Jury if you have the money left.

In the end it's a question of taking over the other gangs by killing off their leaders, or one of them taking you out. Income is earned monthly from your various operations.

CRITICISM

'Gangsters! makes a nice change from lasering aliens, and it's the sort of game several people can join in. I had a go at shopping all my rival gang bosses but the trial results were all Innocent! The inlay suggets you should be ruthless—so perhaps it's no different from zapping aliens after all.'

'There seems to be more detail in this game than in their previous Dallas. *The responses are quite fast too, although I can't help thinking that some machine code would speed up the city map. Interesting to play.'*

'The Moral Majority are hardly likely to approve of this game what with teaching people how to run brothels and what else! Having said that, it is a pretty good family game, though I can't see these sort of strategies as very addictive.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard play: slow
Use of colour: good
Graphics: slow to build up but very clear
Sound: useful
Skill levels: 9
General rating: good

Use of computer	50%
Graphics	55%
Playability	60%
Getting started	63%
Addictive qualities	53%
Value for money	70%
Overall	58½%

BRAIN DAMAGE

Producer: **Silversoft**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **I Morrison & D Anderson**

We're deep inside the computer again, but the first flush of youth seems to have vanished. 'I was just hanging around, on standby as it were, logic levels at an all time low, my printed circuit bored — my keys depressed....' it says on the inlay!

So, welcome aboard, but this bored computer still has the edge over a mere arcade player. You're in control of a tank inside the varied maze of the circuit boards (or is that boreds) and hot on your tail are a variety of electronic cratures such as the Electron Panzer — not very bright but fast, the Marauder and the Centurian, smarter still, and the Rogue Program. The object, quite simply, is to hit one of them to get to a new level. It's a measure of how fast the game is that even with only one hit to concentrate on, it's not easy! You can only fire one blast at a time but the laser ricochets, which can be useful. A complex array of control key options allows you to move up, down, left and right, rotate the gun turret and fire.

CRITICISM

'The great trick with this game is to fire and run. Standing still can sometimes mean a successful shot reaches the target just behind the target's successful shot at you! Rogue Programs can't be hit, so just avoid them like the plague. Not only does everything move fast in this game, the screens change at an amazing pace if you're quick at getting in a successful shot. Quite addictive.'

'Good packaging, and an excellent title page for **Silversoft** *with the twinkle on the* **S.** *The graphics are large and quite well drawn. Overall, well up to Silversoft's usual standard but not quite as addictive as I would have expected.'*

'Certainly a good maze chase type of game and very fast. Controlling is quite difficult — even using a joystick there are three keys to press. The ricocheting bullets are superb.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: 3 different keyboard options
Joystick options: Kempston, Protek or AGF
Keyboard play: responsive, rotation very fast
Use of colour: average
Graphics: good
Sound: continuous and good
Skill levels: 3
Lives: 3
Screens: multiple
General rating: good

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	70%
Playability	70%
Getting started	62%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	68%
Overall	69%

Playing video games may lead to BRAIN DAMAGE.



GRAND PRIX DRIVER

Producer: **Britannia**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Chris Weber**

There have been some amazingly realistic race track games in the arcades. Newcomers to the personal computer are probably most bitterly disappointed when they see the state of the art in the computer car racing. We've always noticed that any program which promises a race track like *Turbo Driver, Race Fun* or even Ultimate's *Tranz-AM*, always sells well. Obviously these games are popular and everyone's searching for the one that will look like the arcade versions. Of course the limitations of the Spectrum prevents any serious comparison being made, but the art of programing is improving enormously and perhaps it won't be too long before someone really does approximate the arcade. Meanwhile, we'll have to make do with what we've got!

And after that preamble on to *Grand Prix Driver.* This is the first program to have a serious go at giving a real 3D effect of the road winding about and with a moving horizon. It isn't in the solid, glowing colour of the arcade original, rather more the coloured outline drawing of, say *3D Combat Zone* — well a little bit more filled in than that.

You're controlling a formula 1 racing car against 30 other cars, controlled by the computer. Naturally the idea is to overtake and avoid crashing with the other cars and be the first one to cross the finishing line. To make life more difficult there are oil patches dotted about on the road. If you manage to pass the 30 cars and remain in one piece a little man appears waving a chequered flag.

As our reviewers soon found, there are some idiosyncracies in the game which rather spoil its attempts at realism, and while they all found the program to be interesting in itself, they agreed that once mastered it loses much of its point.

CRITICISM

'The keyboard positions are sensibly laid out, the colour is well used and the 3D effect of the road is good. I thought the sound was poor — only engine noises. The only trouble is that once mastered there seems to be little point in playing the game again.'

'I found the overtaking was rather difficult because the other cars are unpredictable. There is some form of indication at the bottom of the screen which tells you which way a particular coloured car is likely to veer, but it's obscure and I found it



Burn rubber and become a GRAND PRIX DRIVER.

unreliable. In fact overtaking can only be done by slowing right down (honest). If you do crash (I did often) the explosion seems to go on forever. The game has a danger of becoming quickly repetitive and loses interest a bit.'

'It seems a pity that a fast racing game has to be brought to a near standstill every time you want to pass a car. That tends to spoil the fun, skill and ruin the sense of realism which is otherwise very good. I got the feeling that this programmer has another and much better game up his sleeve. In the meantime, it's still the best looking road race game I've seen.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: Caps Shift/Z left/right, Symbol shift/space brake/accelerate. Quite well laid out.
Joystick options: Kempston, Sinclair Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: average
Graphics: good, slightly shaky on character scrolling
Sound: mixed feelings from poor to good (!)
Skill levels: one
Lives: four
General rating: fair to average

Use of computer:	67%
Graphics:	56%
Playability	57%
Getting started:	65%
Addictive qualities:	50%
Value for money:	35%
Overall	55%

3D SPACE WARS

Producer: **Hewson Consultants**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**

There is now an established tradition of cockpit view games for the Spectrum, some of the Star Trek programs may be included, *Galaxy Attack* from **Sunshine Books**, *Spawn of Evil* from **DK Tronics**, and of course *Timegate* from **Quicksilva** are all of the ilk. *3D Space Wars* by **Hewson Consultants** is a worthy addition. It does not boast the complexities of a Star Trek game, but on the other hand it offers a more rapid encounter with the enemy and is more of a shoot em up.

The inlay tells you that you have taken command of your world's last fighter-killer spacecraft, and naturally it is only you who can prevent the ultimate disaster — destruction of your civilisation by the unscrupulous race of murderers called the Seiddab. Now read on...

CRITICISM

'There is very little setting up in this game, the minute it starts the enemy are there, massed right in front of you and attacking, so there's none of the complex cross-referencing which makes many other similar games more strategy than aracde. The cockpit view is very good, with moving star backgrounds that give you a directional indication. Below the viewscreen your instruments are simple and to the point. A galaxy map shows the Seiddab clustering, and spreading, fuel and speed are shown as bar codes. Projecting into the viewscreen you can see the nose of your craft and its twin lasers. These both fire with very satisfying perspective beams which meet at the centre of the cross hairs. The Seiddab craft themselves are well drawn and move in three dimensions. The object of the game, naturally, is to get rid of as many of the enemy before they get you. There are refuelling points in space which you must locate

BYTE

Producer: **CCS**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.00**
Language: **BASIC**
Author: **O&S Ben-Ami**

Byte is a text adventure. The object is to enter a three dimensional maze to find the ten computer circuits needed to build a computer. The inlay card specifies the ten circuits to be found, and they may be lying about or hidden in boxes or caches. As well as the electronic bits and pieces there are also monsters sent to get you by the great computer BYTE. These can be despatched either with bribery or by fighting them mentally or physically. Mental battles take the form of a spelling or maths test. If you choose a physical combat. this is shown graphically, for instance,a bow and arrow which you must position to aim at the monster. If you miss the monster has a go.

Before entering this maze of words, you must select a skill level. There are seven with level one having only 27 rooms and level seven having as many as 125. You must also decide just what computer you are going to build ranging up from a Jupiter Ace (they'll have to update that one!) to an IBM PC. The ZX Spectrum comes in at number three, by the way.

CRITICISM

'The instructions are rather complicated to follow at first what with the computer you want to build, and a complicated set up called TRAITS. But once into the adventure it is fairly conventional. Instead of the more common scrolling up of text and input commands this game presents you with a description and a 'press any key' cursor, it then tells you what you can see in the room, your traits (stengths) and an enter command in the centre of the screen. Simple abbreviations may be entered which saves all that typing in.'



'For what is largely a text adventure, this has some very colourful lettering, but the constant use of reverse flashing gets a bit tiring on the eyes afte a while. The game itself is a standard type adventure, but on meeting monsters you do seem to have a fair chance of survival. I suspect that the technical terminology of this game may put off a lot of people although a technical knowledge of computers is hardly essential. A reasonable adventure generally, with plenty of skill levels.'

'I think the story is novel, unfortunately the processing of commands seems unnecessarily long-winded, and after a while it becomes irritating. Good use of colour though.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard play: reasonably responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: clear, neatly drawn when not text
Sound: average
Skill levels: 7
General rating: average

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	62%
Playability	53%
Getting started	50%
Addictive qualities	52%
Value for money	58%
Overall	57½%

before your power runs out. Very playable.'

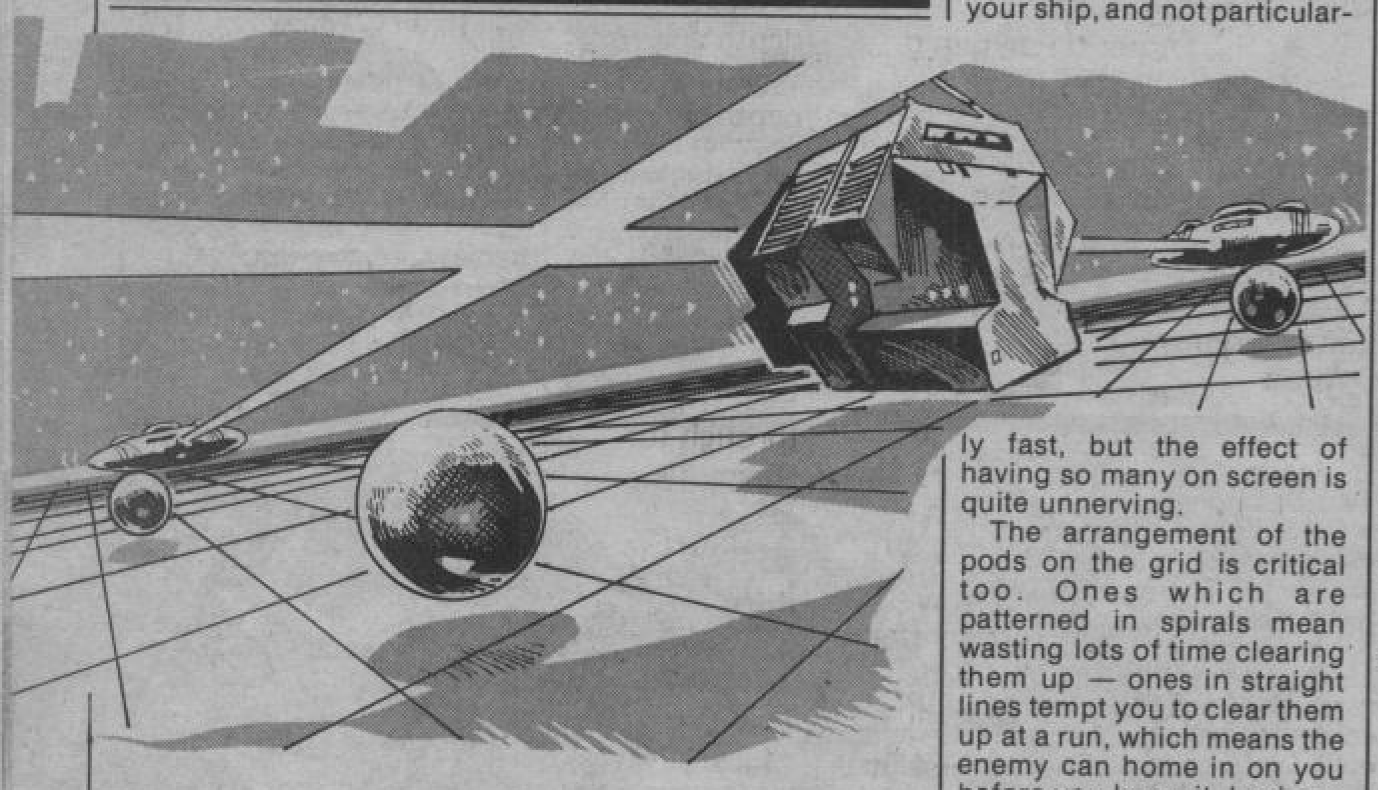
'The graphics give a good 3D view and the game is quite playable on the early stages. Successive waves of atttackers are more destructive than the last and it gets quite difficult. One drawback is the fuel supply — you have to keep an eye on it, and it does run down quickly. The game is good for 16K.'

'Movement and control of your ship is very smooth and positive, compared to say, *Timegate*. Half the fun of playing is to become skilled at centring the enemy in your cross hairs. To do it accurately takes practice. A lot of playing appeal but I didn't think there was quite enough going on in the end to make it totally adddictive to play.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: large range of options including cursors, six keys in all used
Joystick options: AGF, Protek, Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: good 3D view
Sound: quite good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 1, defences worn down gradually
General rating: good

Use of computer	62%
Graphics	69%
Playability	70%
Getting started	73%
Addictive qualities	64%
Value for money	70%
Overall	68%



Transversion

Producer: **Ocean**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.90**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **C Urquhart/N Pierpoint**

Ocean have been quite consistent in their games, bringing out a series of well written and well designed programs on traditional themes. *Transversion* is probably one of their best yet, combining those two important qualities of any good arcade game, simplicity of idea and the sort of addictiveness that would keep you pumping in your money if you *were* in an arcade. It is also neatly packaged with an exciting inlay, and perhaps the first on-screen title that actually looks like the cover of the cassette.

THIS IS WHAT YOU DO

You are Captain of the Elimax and your mission is to enter the Galactic Grid and eliminate the alien pods, passing over them with your Raydon field. Fortunately the Raydon field is a very advanced piece of technology so there's no firing to take care of. Like **Quicksilva's** *Gridrunner*, a bright red grid opens up before you — the Galactic Grid — but fortunately the similarity with *Gridrunner* ceases there. The pods, which are alien spawn in reality, appear as bright blue dots arranged in symetrical patterns over the grid, and the Elimax appears in the centre.

The alien Guardians can be seen on all four edges of the grid, top, bottom and both sides. These move constantly along their axis, firing very solid looking missiles at you. Should you remain stationary, or travel along a single grid line for more than a moment, the aliens will line up and fire — they home in instantly. At any one moment you can find yourself having to dodge four missiles.

In fact the travel speed of the missiles is the same as your ship, and not particularly fast, but the effect of having so many on screen is quite unnerving.

The arrangement of the pods on the grid is critical too. Ones which are patterned in spirals mean wasting lots of time clearing them up — ones in straight lines tempt you to clear them up at a run, which means the enemy can home in on you before you know it. Losing a life means having to start all over again on that grid. If you clear the first sheet, the second (it alternates between every other sheet from then on) is a green spawn arranged in a spiral and very close to the sides where you're in the most danger. But more points are awarded for each pod eliminated, so if you lose a life here, you're almost certain to get to the third sheet, and so on.

GENERAL

The packaging is excellent and the cover picture describes the nature of the game very well. The inlay contains detailed loading and playing instructions, which are repeated on screen. Control keys are Q/A = up/down, N/M = left/right. There is a hold and restart function. Several joysticks are catered for in the screen menu. On screen scoring and hi-score are shown, along with grid level and lives left.

CRITICISM

'The graphics are small and simple but they move very well.'

'As far as the graphics go, I don't think any improvement could be made. It has excellent keyboard layout and the program is very responsive. It has a good use of colour.'

'The colour was nothing special, but the keyboard layout is good and easy to control. I thought the sound was very good.'

'Well used sound effects, with some recognisable tunes.'

'The graphics, though simple and small, are to the point and very smooth. There is continuous sound and the tune *"Congratulations"* if you make a new hi-score. I found the keyboard positions so good, that they were easier to play with than a joystick. This is a very nail-biting game and addictive to a danger level! I also found the graphics to be extremely "accurate ', in the sense that you can almost brush a missile and not lose a life — none of the "but it didn't hit me" arguments here.'

'A game that will not be tired of easily.'

'A game to come back to.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: very good
Joystick options: Kempston, Quickshot, AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: very easy and rsponsive
Use of colour: mixed opinions, average to good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: very good
Skill levels: none mentioned, but it does get harder
Lives: five
General rating: highly recommended

Use of computer:	95%
Graphics:	70%
Playability	83%
Getting started:	85%
Addictive qualities:	90%
Value for money:	75%
Overall:	83%





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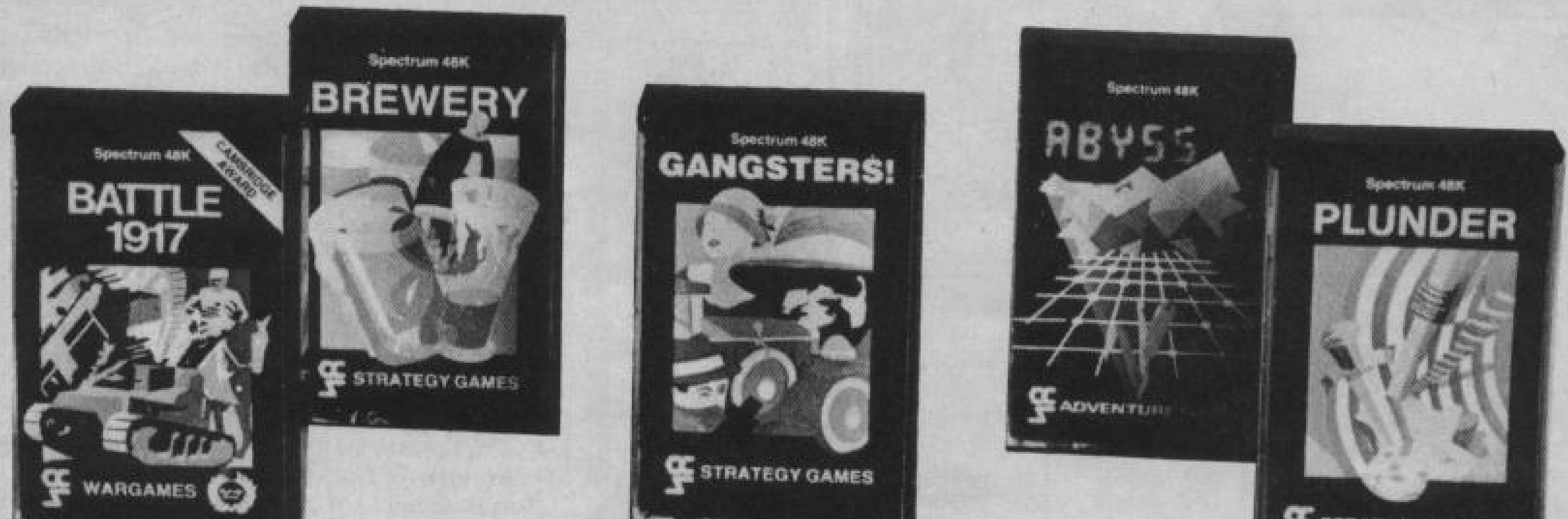
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Strategy Games.
They're no pushover.

MRS MOPP

Producer: **Computasolve**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Tina Billet**

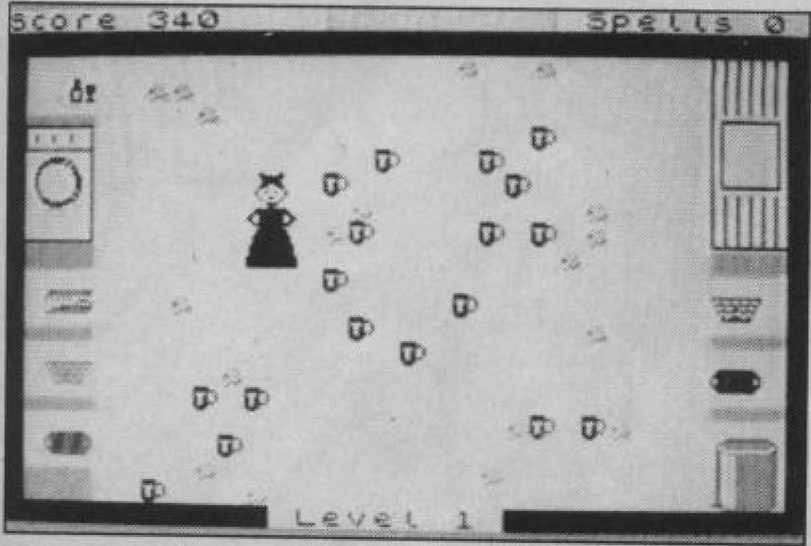
Mrs Mopp has two differences to the usual, it's written by a woman, and it's original in concept — at least as far as computer games go, if you're a housewife it's a plain old kitchen sink drama!

Mrs Mopp's family is one of the messiest in the world, and even that's being kind to them. They litter cups, clothes, dust and lord knows what else all over the floor. Moppsie herself has five utensils to help her in the task, two types of basket, a dustpan and brush and two different trays. Each is colour coded and can only be used to clean up or collect specific items. The blue cups, for instance, may only be collected on the blue tray and the pale green clothes in the pale green basket. There's also a washing machine, a sink and a dustbin. When she's collected enough cups you must take her to the sink where you see the cups being washed, likewise for dust and washing.

Collecting a utensil is done by moving up to it, rather as you did in *Pssst*. Mrs Mopps then changes from black to the colour of the utensil. As she moves over objects elligible to be collected, she picks them up. When overloaded she begins flashing and you must get her to the correct appliance. Depositing a utensil is done by sliding up to its empty slot.

Like any hard working housewife, Mrs Mopp likes a little tipple. In fact there's a bottle and glass in the top left hand corner. If you take her up there you mustn't let her stay too long or she gets tipsy and then drunk, whereupon she jitters all over the place uncontrollably.

When the mess gets too much and movement becomes impossible, Mrs. Mopp gives up and leaves home. End of game!



MRS MOPP could do with a tipple — she's all worn out and about to leave home.

CRITICISM

'I had a tape error on my copy. The track seemd out of line and made it hard to load. But after that I got some well presented instruction. A good game and very playable.'

'Mrs Mopp seems to have a fund of magic spells to use when all is lost, but all I ever got, was 'Sorry, right out of spells!'. Which just goes to show that elbow grease is the only way. At the rate which the muck accumulates this is not easy to play. The graphics are good, compiled with the PSS compiler I noticed. Fairly addictive.'

'Not a game for the squeamish. I'm glad I'm not a housewife if this is what it's really like. It's reminiscent of **Ultimate's** *Pssst*, and has the same panicky quality about it. But in Mrs Mopp's life no flowers bloom. I'm afraid I never beat Mrs B's score (the authoress I presume), so I'll go back to throwing rubbish on the floor rather than cleaning it up.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: well placed, A/Z up/down, N/M left/right and S for Spells.
Joystick option: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive and 8-directional
Use of colour: good
Graphics: good, well compiled
Sound: fairly good
Skill levels: unknown, but several
Lives: 1
General rating: good

Use of computer	65%
Graphics	69%
Playability	75%
Getting started	65%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	71%
Overall	69%

Armageddon

Producer: **Silversoft**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **C Knight**

Armageddon is a copy of the arcade favourite 'Missile Command', where you launch missiles from a limited supply to defend your cities. There are several versions of this game already around for the Spectrum, one indeed called by the same name from **Ocean**.

This version has all the familiar features of the arcade game. The six citites are protected by three missile bases. Naturally the bases must be defended most ardently otherwise there's nothing left to protect the cities. In addition to the incoming missile traces,there are low flying aircraft and satellites which launch independent projectiles of their own. Some missiles are heat sensitive and will hover over an exploding missile until it is safe to descend further. Each attack wave grows in intensity until it is almost impossible to survive.

CRITICISM

'This is a pretty close copy, with the major drawback being that four way movement keys to track the missiles is no substitute for the arcade original's tracker ball control.'

'Hard to determine the value of a game which already been so much copied. The use of colour and the graphics are good, everything moves at a fast pace and it's difficult to master, but in the end it doesn't have lasting appeal for me.'

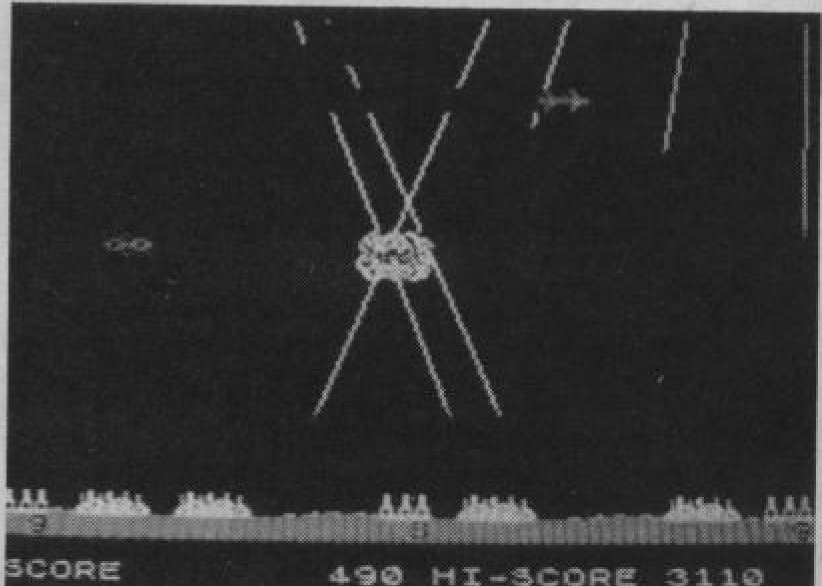
'The various options for firing are useful, but you're probably better off with the joystick for targeting. A fast version with neat graphics.

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: sensible
Joystick options: Kempston (via 2-part load, watch out!)
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: average, nice explosions
Sound: average, nice frying noise for explosions
Skill levels: increases with each screen
Lives: 6 (cities)
General rating: a good copy of the original with mixed feelings about addictive qualities.

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	72%
Playability	75%
Getting started	63%
Addictive qualities	65%
Value for money	75%
Overall	68%

ARMAGEDDON strikes from the skies.



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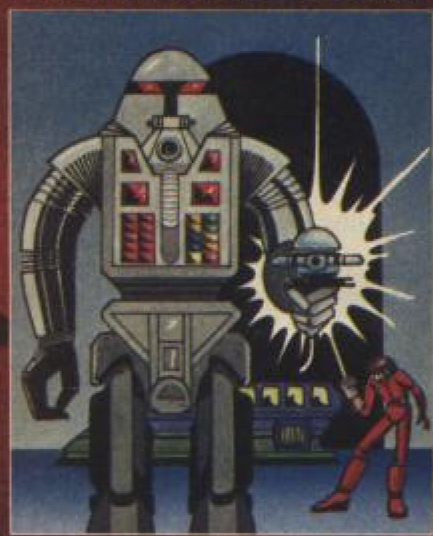


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DEVIL RIDES IN



THE DEVIL RIDES IN

I uttered the last incantations as the clock struck thirteen. All fell silent except for a faint rustling in the corner. From out of the shadows they came, all Hell's fury against me but I was not defenseless until the Angel of Death, astride a winged horse, joined the battle. Avoiding his bolts of hell fire, I took careful aim. My chances were slim, but my luck held.

(Fast moving, machine code, all action, Arcade game)

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NOTE: "The Wrath of Magra" is a complete adventure. You need not buy "Volcanic Dungeon" or "Black Crystal" to play it.

Available from Feb '84

CARNELL SOFTWARE LTD

PUSH OFF

Producer: **Software Projects**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price:
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Andrew Giles**

Push Off is all about Bertha the Ladybird (who's no lady). She's in this garden being pursued by four somewhat unpleasant insects out to get her. The garden hardly resembles one though, looking more like a pile of that bubble packing they use today. In fact the screen is filled with square, green bricks which Bertha can manipulate. She can burn them out of her way, create them and also send them shooting along at her enemies, hopefully crushing them to death. But the insects can also burn away the bricks to get at her. Four little bells are dotted about and if Bertha touches one it rings, rendering the insects helpless for a few moments.

In fact his is a variation on a theme which **Blaby** brought out in the summer called *Do Do & The Snow Bees*.

CRITICISM

'*Push Off* is rather an oddball game, quite original and very addictive. The graphics are extremely good with excellent movement of bricks and insects.'

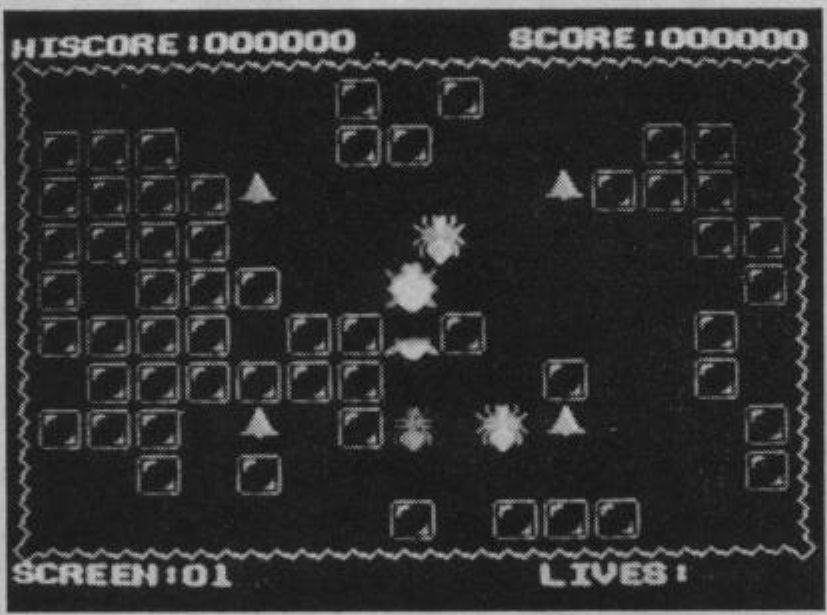
'This is one of those games that's instantly attractive to look at and makes you want to play it. It's also very hard and fast with wonderful graphics and colours. The only pity is that the control keys are oddly placed, especially for firing.'

'A very addictive game to play, with just the right amount of difficulty as the screens increase. Why did they go and put the fire key on P? It's an awkward stretch with ENTER and SPACE for the up and down keys. Otherwise, excellent.'

COMMENTS

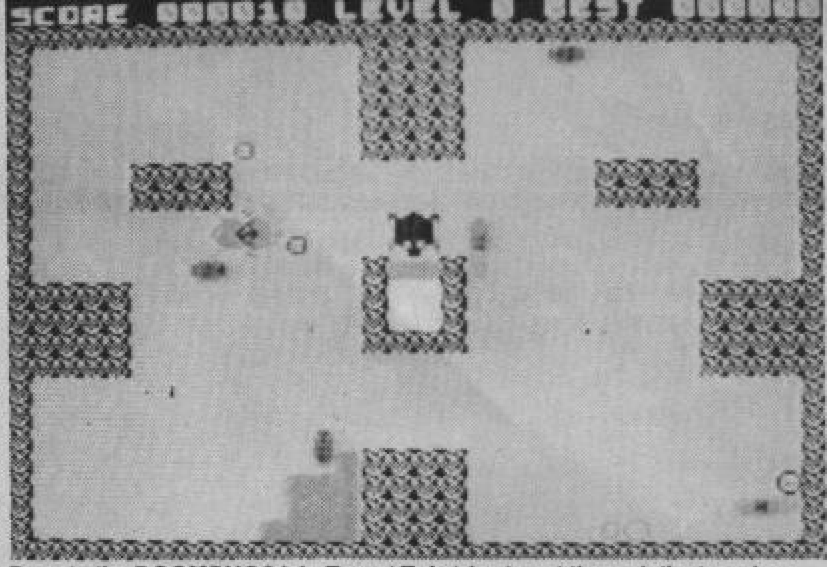
Keyboard positions: all our reviewers complained about the layout, CAPS SHIFT/Z left/right is fine but ENTER/SPACE for up/down with P for fire is very awkward.
Joystick options: AGF, Protek or Kempston
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 8 (8 screens)
Lives: 5
General rating: very good to excellent

Use of computer	78%
Graphics	89%
Playability	90%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	87%
Overall	85%



A screen full of bubble pack and voracious insects in PUSH OFF.




Deep in the DOOMBUGS lair, Tarant Tula tries to get through the trap door.

DOOMBUGS

Producer: **Workforce**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**

Doom Bugs is an entirely original sort of creepie crawlie game, best left alone if you're squeamish about these things! It introduces us to **Tarant Tula**, an engaging blue beetle who is our hero — but he's an endangered species, trapped in the Grubbers lair. Inside the lair the young **Grubbers** are left to hatch out (small round egglike things) and honey is left for them to feed off. When two Gubbers meet, a nasty squirmy green **Bubbergrubber** results. Should two Bubbergrubbers mate a **Red Backed Grubber** is produced. These are similar in size to Tarant Tula but touching one is instant death.

In the centre of the lair is a trap door. To get through it Tarant Tula must first eat a mouthful of honey and then ram the door. It takes several attacks to break through to the next level, taking more honey beetween each attempt. At the same time the other members of the Grubber family are also gobbling at the honey. Tarant Tula must also dash about eating Grubbers and Bubbergrubbers to prevent them from becoming Red Backs. It's no easy life!

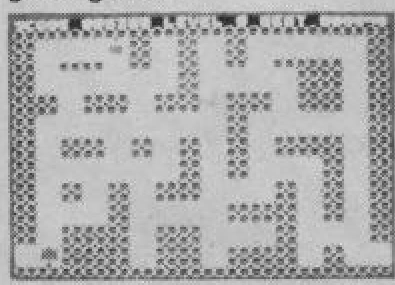
Successfully breaking through the trap door leads poor old Tarant Tula into a maze guarded by three Red Backs. Should he get through there safely it leads into the next lair where the temperature is warmer and the eggs hatch quicker — and so on.

CRITICISM

'Because of its originality and cute graphics, this is an instantly likeable game to play — and it isn't easy either! You only have one life, so the frustration of messing up just before getting your highest score is terrible — in anger I kept pressing the start button and having another go.'

'This is an addictive game to play, no doubt. My only complaint is that Tarant Tula keeps moving once a key has been pressed until you press another direction. Makes him a bit hard to control, especially in the maze, or when under attack from Red Backs, which do home in on him. A game to come back to anyway.'

'The graphics are quite good and it's reasonably addictive in playing. Tarant Tula is a bit difficult to control because of the continuous movement. Quite a good game.'


Red Backs block the way in the second screen.

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: sensible, Q/Z up/down, I/P left/right
Joystick options: none
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: average
Graphics: good
Sound: average
Skill levels: increasing difficulty by screen
Lives: 1
General rating: above average addictivity, good game

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	68%
Playability	65%
Getting started	67%
Addictive qualities	60%
Value for money	68%
Overall	67%

WILD WEST HERO

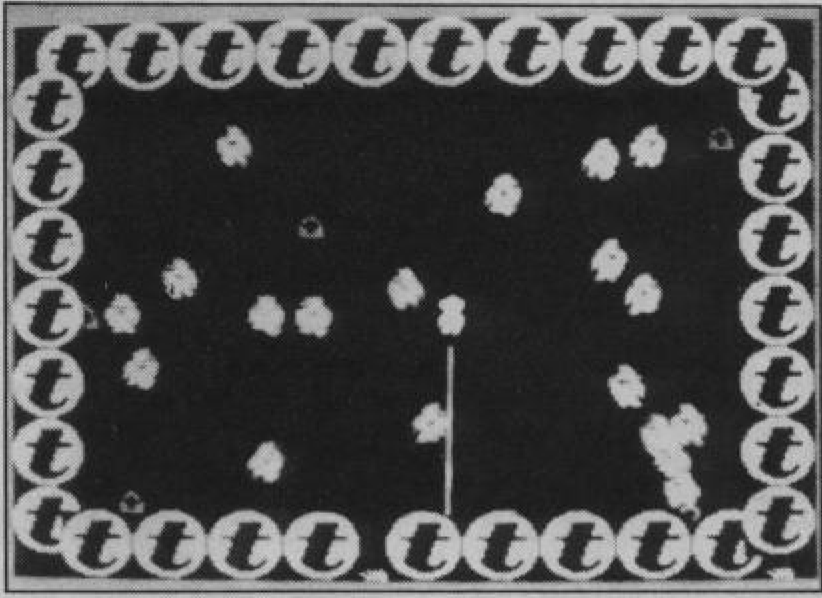
Producer: **Timescape**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.90**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Silicon Kid with help from M Stockwell & P Holms**

Step out into the cacti-strewn desert and shoot it out with rampaging bandits. In most respects this game resembles the robotic Frenzy type, where you find yourself surrounded and heavily outnumbered by the enemy. Instead of maze walls there are clumps of cacti, treacherous trees and other obstacles which mean instant death when touched. The hero himself is assembled in the centre of the screen rather as he is in **Virgin's** *Spectron*, out of little bits which whizz on from the top, bottom and sides.

CRITICISM

'Our hero (Chris 'Clint' Passey) stepped out onto the plain with his automatic fire and repeat Colt 45 (based on the *Fistful of Dollars* guns no doubt) and had a go. The firing is continuous, all you have to do is move around and let the Colt do the rest. The bandits don't shoot back but they outnumber you heavily. The trick is to manoeuvre across to the side and shoot back across as the bandits home in your position. It's fairly easy at first, but with subsequent screens things really hot up as the numbers of bandits increase.'

'A nice inlay and witty instructions back up the jolliest title screen yet, with nicely scrolling logo round the edges. It's really a Frenzy or Berserk type of game, but the smoother graphics, which are quite big too, and the sheer speed make it exciting to play. The dangerous objects littered about which restrict your movement are also an added improvement.'



'Howdee folks! Just step this way, mind the cacti, and become a WILD WEST HERO.'

'This is the best Berserk game I've seen yet, with big graphics and responsive controls. You get bonus lives after 20,000 points — that takes some going!'

COMMENTS

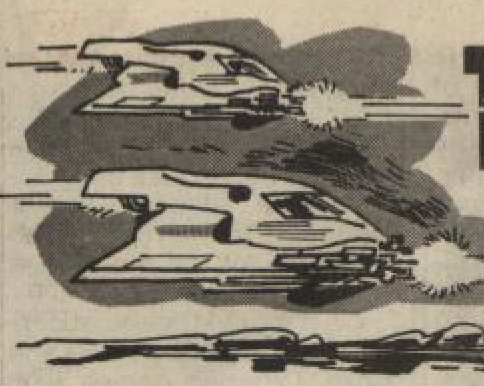
Keyboard positions: sensible, Q/A up/down, SYMBOL SHIFT/SPACE left/right
Joystick option: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive, smooth, 8-directional
Use of colour: good
Graphics: very good
Sound: good
Skill levels: increasing difficulty by screen
Lives: 3
General rating: very good

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	80%
Playability	80%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	83%
Value for money	83%
Overall	82%

Reviews continue on 88




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THE INVASION HAS BEGUN

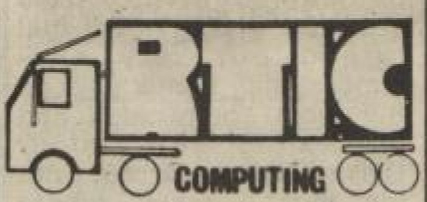
LLOYD MANGRAM takes a brief and personal glance over his shoulder at some of the software antics of the past year.

1983 was an astoundingly good year for the ZX Spectrum. We are told that there are now well over half a million units in our homes, and that figure must have taken a leap upwards before your Christmas turkey got carved. Success for the Spectrum has had a lot to do with its price, but a computer is only as good as its software, and the Spectrum has been well served throughout 1983.

The start of a new year is traditionally a time to take stock, so let's take a brief look back.

Barely established on the market this time last year, there were only a handful of companies producing software for Sir Clive's new colour Spectrum, among them, of course, Sinclair itself. It is quite astonishing to see just now many software producers have appeared during the last ten months to tempt us with games for the Spectrum. Looking through my December 1981 copy of *Computer & Video Games* (yes, they were going back then) I noted that a company in Liverpool were offering a *Star Trek* game for the ZX81 — they were called **Bug-Byte. Silversoft** were in the same issue with another ZX81 game of, oddly enough, *Star Trek*. I also spotted a small ad in the classified section for *Volcanic Dungeon* (make cheques payable to R Carnell), but of the big names with whom we have recently become so familiar, there was no sign, and the mag was filled with details of Atari, Intelevision and arcade news.

By April 82 **Silversoft** are indulging in much bigger ads with more ZX81 games available, and other names have appeared. The end of the month will see the third ZX Microfair in London and the new companies are taking advantage, **dk'tronics, Kayde,** a new outfit calling themselves **Micro Gen Quality Products, Bug-Byte**



have double page ads, **C-Tech** has a full page, and a lorry profile bearing the letters **RTIC** announces the arrival of **Artic** on the scene. Other names in the issue which have since become familiar are **Abacus, A&F Software** (for the Acorn Atom though), **Macronics, Hewson Consultants, Addictive Games** with a programme called *Football Manager* (which goes to show how long a game can last!) and last but most interestingly, a small ad from a company claiming to have the 'finest machine code fast moving graphics arcade games available' — **Quicksilva.**



A year later and it's April 83. The Spectrum is well on its way to becoming the top selling personal computer and the amazing software revolution is just beginning. Opening my April issue of *C&VG* I first notice a blasting full page ad for *Hobbit* and *Penetrator* from **Melbourne House**, two games that have steadily remained in the top selling charts for all year. A spokesperson for Melbourne told me at the Personal Computer World Show that they were hoping the *Hobbit* would die off soon, but it shows no sign of doing so. (I'm sure they're pleased really).

A quick flip through the issue reveals a few names who at the time were not doing any Spectrum games, like **Anirog** and **Rabbit**, but **Softek** has appeared and **Bug-Byte** are now in full glowing colour advertising *Spectres*, **dk'tronics** already have **3D Tanx** out and the bully from **Ritimba** is *Dictator*, **Romik** have a full page, **New Generation, R&R** and **Micromania** are visible, **M C Lothlorien** is wargaming, **Martech** is buzzing, and an exciting new company has splashed out on no less than five colour pages to inform us that **THE INVASION HAS BEGUN!** At the time they coined the phrase **Imagine** probably had little idea of just how right they were. So much seems to have happened between then and now that you could be forgiven for thinking that April was really years ago.

Standing in the crowded aisles of the PCW show at the Barbican in September I had to marvel at the progress Spectrum software had made, at the quantity and the quality of the games available. It is difficult to pick out highlights from the year, and inevitably unfair on those who get left out, but at the risk of being shouted down I'll have a go.

Certainly the early high spot was the success of *Hobbit* and *Penetraor. Hobbit* was described by one critic at the time as 'a game by which future games will be judged', and it sets the scene for so many Go-West-Young-Man adventures which were to follow shortly. *Penetrator* is still reckoned by many to be the finest Scramble game of the lot, although comparing its graphics to present day standards, it looks pretty primitive. At the time, however, I remember thinking that if you could do this at home then the arcades must be dead.

Both these programs stood out at the time against the flurry of activity that took place in the invading galaxian asteroid belt. Almost every one of the newly emerging companies has had a go at these favourite arcade games, many programs being



uprated versions of earlier ZX81 games. **Imagine's** *Arcadia* comes instantly to mind as one of the better galaxian style games, **Quicksilva**'s *Space Intruders* is also worth a mention, **Softek**'s *Firebirds* was one of the better Pheonix types, and I always had a sneaky liking for **Mikrogen**'s quaint *Space Zombies* with its colourful trainload of aliens buzzing erratically around the sky. No one seems to



have done all too well with asteroidal games however (though they probably sold like hot rocks). All the versions suffer from poor graphics, uninteresting colours and miscalculated attack speeds. Of the type my vote goes to **Abacus** with *Sentinel*, a game with



enough complexity to make it exciting to play and watch.

Despite this concentration on the obvious, Spring resulted in a number of original games which indicated a serious attitude to the abilities of the Spectrum. **Quicksilva**'s *Timegate* by John Hollis gave a new lease of life to the Star Trek theme and introduced us to the highly realistic moving star backgrounds. From the same company Ian Andrew's *Mined-Out* deserves a special mention for its nail-biting qualities and the fact that it gave Quicksilva's copywriters the opportunity to come up with the most ludicrously obscure blurb ever written for a game. (Something they've hardly looked back on either). At the same time **Imagine** were busy introducing us to *Schizoids* which relieved us of the responsibility of zapping aliens and allowed us to bulldoze them to death instead. The game was well received by critics, but I found it unplayable. They were to make up for that shortly by bringing out *Molar Maul* and *Ah Diddums*, certainly two among the most original games to emerge this year.



Leaving the asteroid belt behind and returning to earth — well almost — **Psion**'s *Flight Simulation* proved that computer games didn't have to be all zap and **Hewson**'s *Nightflite* provided a creditable alternative for 16K users as well. Of course, as spring turned to summer you could have turned the nose of your aircraft round to buzz the Empire State Building,



where another favourite was turning his back on the Vics, Orics and Beebs of this world to haunt Spectrum owners. Kong games may have been a rave in the arcades but some early Spectrum versions turned out less than wonderful. **Blaby**'s *Killer Kong* and **Ocean**'s *Kong* were among the best, but the Blaby version has the most exciting sound. Away from the heady heights of New York,2 Slippery Sid from **Silversoft** and *Bozy Boa* from **CDS** were slithering around an English Country Garden eating frogs and snails and avoiding toads and flowers, whilst their nastier cousins, the centipedes, were attacking mankind in alarming quantities. Just about everyone had a supermegasprectripede on the rampage, and I don't think we've seen the last of them yet. Among the better versions were **Rabbit**'s *recent Centropods* and **Silversoft**'s much older *Cyber Rats* (okay, so a rat ain't a centipede, but what's a few hundred legs between friends?). **Softek, C-Tech, Hewson, dk'tronics, Ocean, Macronics, CDS, R&R** and **Protek** to name a few, all released centipedal monsters upon us during the year.

Such a host of creepie-crawlies doubtless explains why the frog population also increased drastically. My favourite was **DJL**'s version, *Froggy*, with its cute graphics and abominably smug frogs (those that didn't get smudged, that is). Oddest frogger of the year award goes to **Virgin Games** for their disappointing *Yomp*, which swapped Paras for hoppers and then mined-them-out once they were across the road.

Leaping neatly from frogspawn to dots, the dreaded pacmania showed little signs of dying out during the year. I must say that I find it difficult to distinguish between the numerous versions, all of which have the usual features and work pretty much as well as another. Perhaps the silliest was **Lasersound**'s *Egg Farm* with its easily outwitted hens. If clearing the screen is the object of ghost-gobbling games, covering it with colour is the aim of painters. There were quite a few of those suddenly sprang up mid-year, somewhat more variable in quality than their pacman cousins. **CDS** promised a *3D Painter* that turned out very one-dimensional, **Romik** gave us the most complicated and interesting with *Colour Clash*. **A&F** came out with the most classic, simply called *Painter*, but my best for all round goes to **Blaby** and their *High Rise Harry*. **Quicksilva/Salamander's** *Traxx*, just released, is also an interesting and frustrating variation on the theme.

Of the host of maze and maze-oriented games it is hard to pick out any for special mention. I liked *Maze Death Race* by **PSS**, **Sunshine Book**'s *Androids*, **Abersoft**'s *Wizard's Warriors*, and for its delightful graphics combined with hyper-panic quality, **New Generation**'s *Escape*. The monsters in this last could easily have been designed by Walt Disney himself. Most frustrating in the worst sense was *ETX* by **Abbex**, though nice to hear him talking.

On the adventure scene, I have to confess that I tend to lose patience with the interminable waiting for responses so I'm inclined to prefer programs that are good in this respect. One which wasn't so quick but still won me over was **Mikrogen**'s *Mad Martha*, almost a verbal maze game and perhaps the most original of the lot this year. I have heard some players complaining about the arcade inserts which prevent you from getting on with the game proper, so they may not have liked **Rushton**'s quirky *Spectrum Safari* with its university-educated wildlife and greedy natives, but I did. Apart from the *Hobbit*, I liked **Derek Brewster**'s *Velnor's Lair*, now marketed by Quicksilva, because of its sense of humour. **Quicksilva** can also boast the fastest response times yet in *Smuggler's Cove*, but the game suffers from being ridiculously hard to get through.

Arcaventures made an appearance too. **Quicksilva**'s *Xadom* and **Phipps Associate's** *Black Planet* deserve a mention, but **Crystal**'s *Halls Of The Things* was one of the most difficult, and their do-it-yourself adventure game *Dungeon Master* proved too daunting for me though I'm sure it's triff really.

On a more strategical note we saw **CCS** with *Dallas* and Corn Cropper games with perhaps a little too much of the random to really imitate life. *Dictator* from **dk'tronics** did well, and of course the ubiquitous **Richard Shepherd** gave us *Transylvanian Tower, Everest Ascent* and now *Devils of the Deep* and *Invincible Island*. I'm afraid I found *Superspy* a little tediously mysterious. **Lothlorien**'s wargames came on strongly after a weak start with rather paltry updates of ZX81 games, but the later *Johnny Reb* and *Redweed* certainly gave value for money.

Coping wtht airliners that had grown tired of flying seemed popular too. Following on from **Psion**'s *Flight Simulation*, the Scottish company **Protek** gave us *Airliner*, where we landed a BAC 1-11 at Edinburgh — at least that was the idea, but perhaps my talents were more intended for the ground, so I followed **Hewson**'s advice and gave up flying for *Heathrow, Air Traffic Control*, an amazing program that packed everything in to 16K. **Protek** too, abandon the air in their newest venture, as you take to your periscope in *Hunter Killer*, a submarine game which could well be the first ever two-handed Spectrum game on the market.

Sports simulation programs have proliferated and even been rewarding. **Addictive**'s long-lived *Football Manager* with its edited 'game highlights' and strategy overtones is a definite winner. **Watson** has updated his *Star Soccer*, **CRL** gave us *Test Match* and *Derby Day*, but probably the oddest game was *Championship Darts* from **Shadow**, actually an effective little program, but darts is one of those games that needs the effort of the throw to work. Sitting at home behind your Spectrum keyboard doesn't seem right. It's funny how companies producing software all seem to get the same idea at the same time, and CDS is challenging Bug-Byte's market leadership with *Pool*, while a brand new company called **Abrasco** also brought out a version in

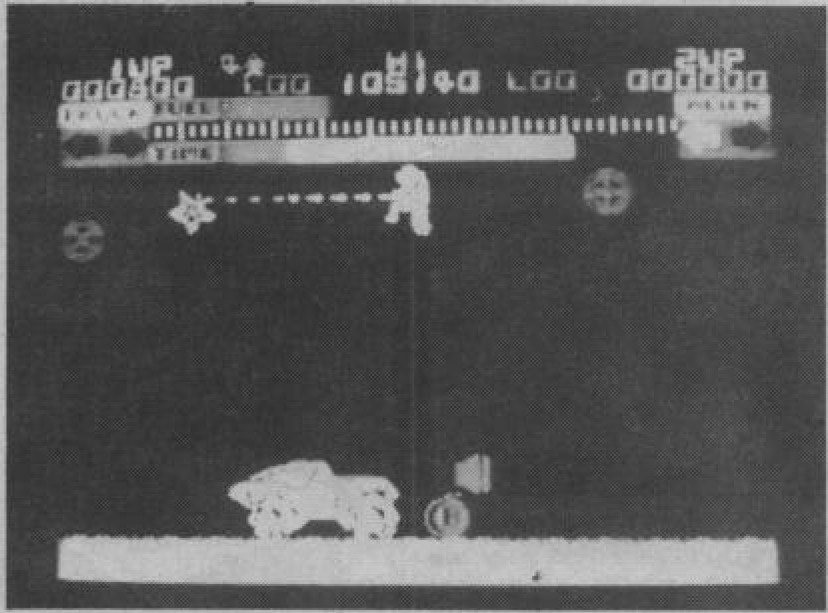
time for the PCW show. In fact I think all three are better than the pub/arcade versions, but the baize could do with mowing as the balls stop so suddenly.

Beyond the obvious, we've been presented with some very original games, but no company has made such an auspicious start as **Ultimate** who put the Zouch into Ashby and Zest into the Spectrum with *Jetpac, Pssst, Cookie* and *Tranz Am*, four excellent and playable games that astonished everyone by how much they managed to pack into 16K. Ultimate are set for the battle to be the best, but their work is cut out. The latter part of the year has seen all the old favourites reasserting their position. **Bug-Byte,** well ahead at the beginning of the year, slipped and failed to bring out many Spectrum games, something which they have definitely put right with the incredible *Manic Miner*. **Imagine** have maintained their lead, and proved to be among the most original games' producers. Design and packaging delays turned *Zzoom* into the most awaited game of the year.

We've seen **Spectrum Games** turn into **Ocean** and **Quest** into **Fantasy. J K Greye** makes a comeback from the long distant past, and **Kayde** vanished without trace despite all the colour ads. **Rabbit** and **Anirog** have seen potential in the Spectrum and turned out half a dozen games in the past two months; **Romik**'s 'honesty's the best policy seems to have kept them well ahead too, and **Psion/ Sinclair** are in a strong position. We saw the biggest ever launch hype with **Virgin Games** who limped onto the market in the summer with some of the worst games ever; and 3D has been the most misused word in the business although **Artic**'s *3D Combat Zone* was wonderful and watch out for **Quicksilva's** *Ant Attack*.

At this year's PCW show it was gratifying to see how games software has asserted itself in what has traditionally been a business show, and how much of it was for the Spectrum. At the start of the year probably only 15 companies catered for the Spectrum, today there are well over 80. Whichever of them does well next year, we can be pretty sure that Spectrum owners are going to benefit by having some of the best games software around. ●





JETMAN hovering above his vehicle and firing at the aliens.

LUNAR JETMAN

Producer: **Ultimate**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**

There can't have been a Spectrum owning games player who hasn't wondered what the wizards at **Ultimate** could do if they moved up to 48K. Well now we know — amazing!

In a neat touch it is we, the games players, who are blamed for the predicament our hero finds himself in. It seems none of us was quite good enough at assembling his rocket in *Jetpac*, and now its various stages are disintegrating in warp space. Luckily he manages to crash land on a strange planet where he is stranded with his Hyperglide Moon Rover and a bunch of the most ferocious aliens yet.

The control keys follow the pattern of *Jetpac*, with alternating left/right keys on the bottom row, fire laser on second row, thrust on third row, and hover on the top row. In addition pressing **Z** or **Symbol Shift** will allow him to pick up or drop any piece of the Moonglider's equipment, and **Caps Shift Break** will let him get in and out of the machine.

Briefly (!) Jetman is discovered standing outside his vehicle and not far from a rounded object which resembles a bomb — it has a B inscribed on it, so it must be a bomb. You have to discover for yourself since no one tells you anything in this game! Instantly aliens move in, 3D green boards, swirling end over end, bouncing red balls, and others in later screens. If an alien hits him on the ground he creates a small crater — if he's in the air they bowl him into a spin dive and he makes another crater on the surface. These craters are important because the Moonglider can't pass them.

If you can get him into the vehicle then he's safe from the aliens and pressing the thrust and direction keys will cause the vehicle to roll along — until it meets a crater crevice. Fortunately the Moonglider is fitted with short bridging units. You have to get Jetman out of the vehicle, pick them up and deposit them in the crater, without making a fresh one! Finding out how to get the bridge units is a trial and error situation — and if you don't already know how, you'll just have to find out!

There are enemy bases some distance from the Moonglider, an indicator at the top of the creen points in their direction. These can be bombed by carrying the bomb and dropping it on the base. The problem is that the base is too far to carry it in the air, because Jetman only has a severely limited fuel supply, and it drops faster if he's carrying something. So he has to drop it on the bonnet of the vehicle, get in and drive, get out, make bridges, get in drive until reaching the base, get out, pick up the bomb, drop it — and all without getting killed off.

CRITICISM

Well, what can you say? Marvellous seems inadequate. The graphics are richly coloured, highly detailed, very similar to *Jetpac*, but just many, many more of them. The alien base is a solid, real and complicated building with whirling radar towers and missile launchers. If you take too long a warning flashes up that a missile is about to be launched. If you've discovered the function of the iron shaped object lying about on the ground, then you can use it to shoot the missile down, but I found flying about and hitting it with the laser was more effective.'

'The graphics are brilliant, every bit as good as the powerful arcade machines, and the amount of things you can do with Jetman and the Hyperglide will keep you going for hours. This is the most maddening and excitingly frustrating game Ultimate have come up with – anyone's come up with. 'I tried the joystick but it's better with the keyboard, but so many keys and so many aliens!'

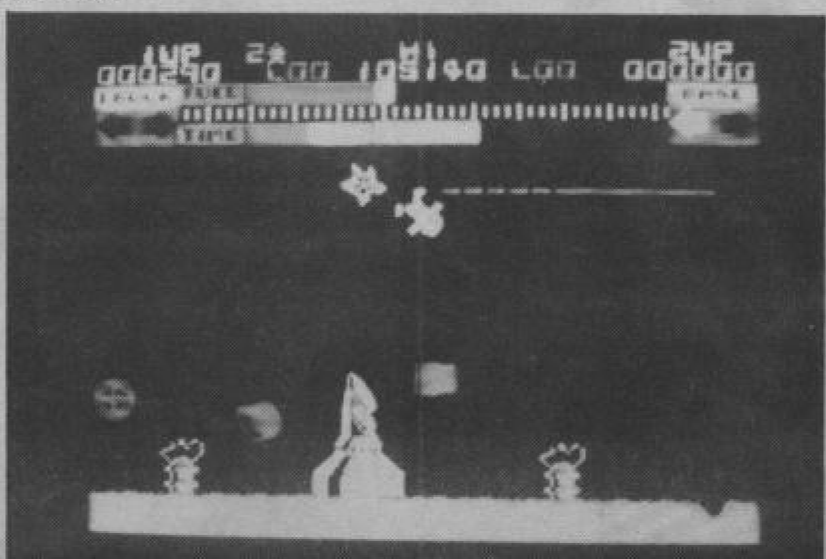
'With *Lunar Jetman* Ultimate live up to their name. I can't imagine anyone failing to like this game or failing to become very mad with it. It should be put on the list of banned drugs!'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: very well laid out — practice makes imperfect but it's the only way
Joystick options: Kempston, AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: excellent and highly responsive
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: excellent
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: no choice, but difficulty increases with each screen — we don't know how many of them there are yet!
Lives: five
Games: one or two player

Use of computer:	**90%**
Graphics:	**99%**
Playability:	**95%**
Getting started:	**90%**
Addictive qualities:	**95%**
Value for money:	**100%**
Overall:	**95%**

The Base at last! Woops! A miscalculation and that's JETMAN going head over heels.



FIREFLASH

Producer: **Abacus**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **K Flynn**

Fireflash is a very superior Missile Defence type game and a Games Designer in one! **Abacus** seems to specialise in games requiring seven or eight digit hands and good co-ordination as well. This is certainly no exception!

You are in command of four missile sites which are protecting your planet from attacking multi-warhead missiles. These, it seems, have managed to get through the *Sentinel* system due to your ineptness as a space pilot in the former game of the same name! How they imagine you're going to do better on the ground than you did in space is another matter, but the people at Abacus are obviously kind in their judgement! The four launch pads are connected by underground tunnels which deliver fresh missiles as long as they remain undamaged. At either end of the screen stand two laser towers which only fire horizontally.

The incoming missiles split up into four smaller warheads if they are not quickly destroyed. You can

select which launch pad to use and after firing your Fireflash missile, guide it to the enemy missile and detonate it. To add to the problems there is a small red space craft which goes about, just under the umbrella of laser fire, bombing all your installations. Using a guided Fireflash on it is dicey as you're as likely to blow up your own buildings as the enemy!

If it's all too fast Abacus have provided a marvellous facility for redesigning features of the game. By pressing key zero **(POKE)** you are asked for the memory address of the item you wish to alter. These are all listed on the excellent inlay, so there's no difficulty involved. It's possible to alter the following: speed of game, speed of reloads, speeds of laser heating (if it overheats through use you must wait for it to cool down), probability of blaster appearing, elapsed time before two bombs used — three bombs used — two blasters used.

In addition to *Fireflash* on side two of the tape is a game called *Destroyer*.

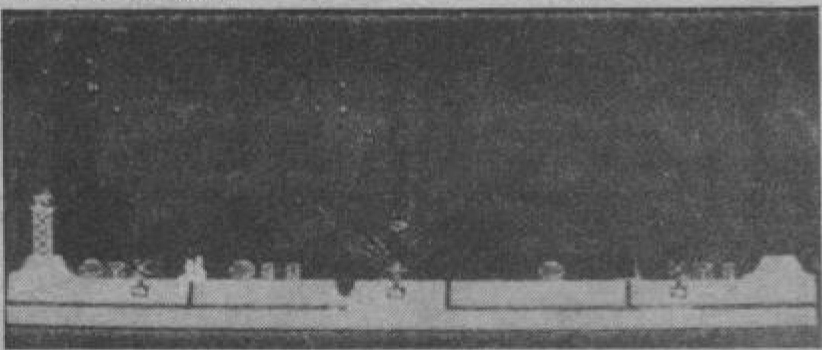
thought **Sentinel** *was underrated – I hope this one won't be.'*

'Fast, fast, fast! Some may think too fast to be good and too busy to cope with. If you're bored with arcade games to date, try this one, whatever else it does — it won't bore you! Pity the end of life sequence takes so long after the final planet levelling bomb has gone off. They could have made it quicker so you can have another go.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard layout: complex with six keys in play, but well laid out:
Joystick option: none
Keyboard play: highly responsive
Use of colour: very good
Sound: very good
Skill levels: nine but redefinable with **POKE** facility

Use of computer:	80%
Graphics:	75%
Playability:	74%
Getting started:	75%
Addictive qualities:	80%
Value for money:	85%
Overall:	**78%**



It takes every finger on all your three hands to save civilisation for mankind in FIREFLASH.

CRITICISM

'At last, a game when there's action all the time for the 16K Spectrum. Very good colours and smooth graphics. A very fast game, excellent playability, good value and — just brilliant!'

'Definitely a game requiring skill in timing. Like their Sentinel, the guided missiles are fast and exceptionally responsive – even too much so, as it's easy to turn one right round and blow up yourself while trying to do three other things at once. Fortunately I was able to slow the speed of the game down with the **POKE** *facility – not that it did much good! The graphics are colourful, neat and very smooth moving. I always*

SPLAT

Producer: **Incentive Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Ian Andrew & Ian Morgan**

Ian Andrew, who created Quicksilva's best seller *Mined-Out*, seems to take some delight in being referred to as, 'over the hill,' at the ripe old age of 22. To

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SPLAT ☐ MOUNTAINS OF KET ☐ 1984 ☐

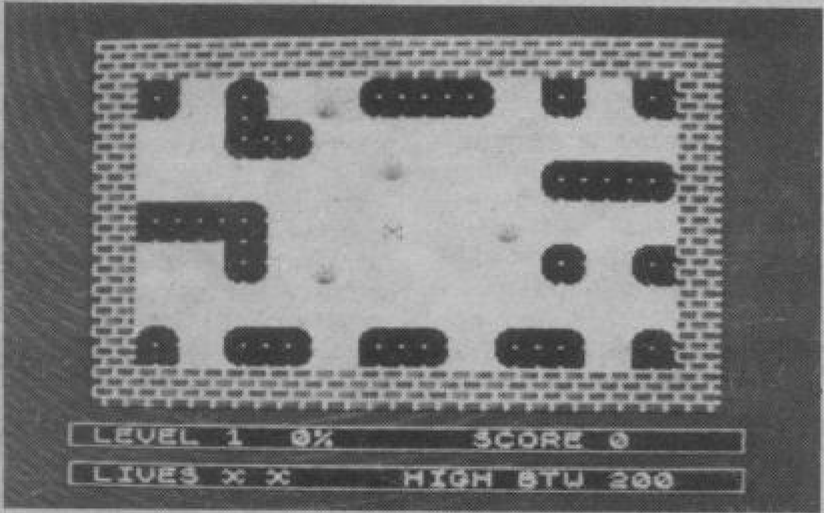
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prove how agile a senile programer can be he has struck back with this new maze type game, which attempts to splatter you against the walls of your tv screen. He also introduces us to a new hero called **Zippy** who, despite his name, proceeds through life at a relatively calm pace. Not that this should put anyone off, for *Splat* has the same nail-biting qualities as *Mined-Out*. It creeps up on you sneakily, turning something that you thought was going to be easy into something that is definitely not.



A liking for grass is Zippy's main problem in SPLAT.

Put simply, Zippy has to move around a maze and escape on level seven. Zippy can eat grass for points (and invisible grass too) and plums for more points. He must avoid the water hazards and nasty spikes. So far, so good, now for the problems. The maze which Zippy inhabits is a great deal bigger than the visible playing area, **and it's unstable.** From the moment the game starts it begins gently scrolling in any direction it fancies, changing direction at any time. Should Zippy encounter the walls which edge the screen it's Splat!

The maze has been specially designed to tempt you into vile little dead ends because that's usually where the juiciest clumps of grass are to be found — and without those points you can't get out. It's all quite deceptive; you can guide Zippy into what looks like a safe position and start happily chewing the cud, when all of a sudden the wall scrolls down on top of you. From this quiet country house scene, panic can set in at a moment's notice.

Progressing satisfactorily to a second screen the maze becomes less helpful still and a river with narrow bridges appears. On the balance side there are plums to eat and invisible grass which signals the fact it has been eaten with a bleep. At higher levels the maze moves much faster and there are spikes dotted around, which although not much trouble to avoid can be very nasty if a panic sets in.

This is a game for points and in fact the makers offered a points competition which closed 14 January 1984. The winner received £500. The game already contains a system which awards you a code for your new high score (over 500 points). The entry with the highest score code was the winner. I see from our notes that it says, *'Level three - Hi Code appeared, 715 points, code: DD1R. Unfortunately died at that moment.'*

GENERAL

All three reviewers playing and writing independently, were very impressed with this game. You can play with **Kempston** or **AGF** and Protek joysticks, use cursor keys or user-defined keys. The graphics are very smooth and the scrolling in four directions is excellent. Colour was commented on favourably. Packaging and instructions are first rate. If you get through a screen the computer shouts out Yippee!

CRITICISM

'Perhaps *Splat* suffers from the random maze movement because it lessens the skill factor, on the other hand it keeps you on your toes.'

'Because of the continuous scrolling of the maze you will never get tired of going round the same old screens.'

'This is a game with growing appeal and a thoroughly mean, ornery streak which guarantees its addictivity.

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: user-defined — excellent
Joystick options: excellent as provided, but with user-defined keys it's suitable for almost any controller
Keyboard only playing: positive, smooth movement
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: good
Sound: good
Skill levels: seven
Lives: three
General rating: highly recommended

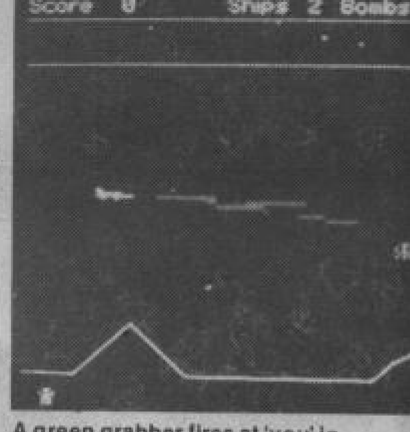
Use of computer:	95%
Graphics:	70%
Playability	74%
Getting started:	85%
Addictive qualities:	75%
Value for money:	90%
Overall:	81½%

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHAS!

Producer: **Crystal Computing** Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.50**
Language: **machine code**

A word of warning first! **Crystal** have been clever, the program has a special loader and instead of the usual interference lines in the border area while the game is loading it remains clear. You might be tempted to think that something has gone wrong and restart, but leave the tape running and all will be well. As the loading continues, the game screen details are slowly built up to reveal the traditional appearance of a defender game.

Once loading is complete you are asked whether or not you have a Fuller box connected. If you have then spectacular sound effects are produced. Unfortunately, if you are not possessed of an amazing Fuller box, then the program is quite silent.



A green grabber fires at 'you' in Crystal's INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHAS!

The game itself is a pretty classic copy of *Defender*.

CRITICISM

'This is one of the best copies of the original I have seen, and includes Landers, Bombers, Mutants, Swarmers and pods, your craft has a laser and smart bombs and flies forward and in reverse. At the top there is a long range scan — a very good one, you really can use it for lining up a laser blast. The graphics are very smooth but not colourful — another feature which is true to the original. Pity about the sound, it makes it very dull to play.'

'It's all very well offering "spectacular sound effects" through the Fuller box, but I wonder how many people have them? The excellent graphics include some of the best cosmic explosions I've yet seen, but all in full stereo silence. Even the muted buzzing of my Spectrum is preferable to this! That apart, we have here a classic copy of an arcade favourite. The scrolling landscape is the usual zig zag line with small humanoids dotted about waiting to be grabbed by the green aliens. It all moves very fast and, if you like the type, is very addictive.'

'It could have been like *Star Wars* with a Fuller box on board. If this is the way games are going for the Spectrum I'd better get CRASH to provide me with one! It seems a bit mean not to have given the disadvantaged unFullerised player a bit of murky sound to be going on with. It's a pity, because this is otherwise a good and playable game. The detail is nice, especially **Crystal's** familiar Hall of Fame where 16 previous players with names like Muad'Dib, Czar Murdicog and the Headless and Greatheart Silver are already listed. Another drawback is the awkward control keys.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: 4 directional keys are in line which is not the best arrangement. Z/X left/right, N/M up/down, A to G fire laser, H to ENTER, smart bombs (2).
Joystick options: AGF, Protek, Kempston, Fuller
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: very little
Graphics: very good
Sound: none unless used with Fuller box
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
General rating: a good copy, playable and addictive.

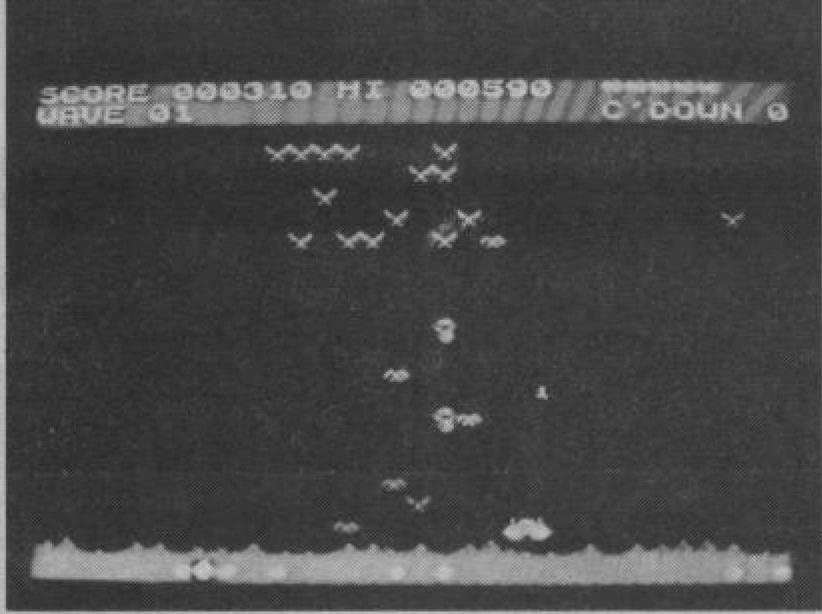
Use of computer	67%
Graphics	80%
Playability	60%
Getting started	70%
Addictive qualities	75%
Value for money	65%
Overall	69½%

HAWKS

Producer: **Lotus Soft**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**

It's a time in the distant future when an ice age has wiped out all but a pocket of humanity. Races of mutant birds with devilish intelligence have evolved and are trying to wipe out the humans. They attack in waves, dropping eggs on parachutes which bury themselves in the soil and then hatch out as large mutated Hawks to regroup and attack later in waves. The humans have found an old Asteroid Mining Vehicle which is equipped with a powerful missile launcher, a short range laser and a mine layer. Now it's up to you!

A large mutated Hawk screams at the top of the screen, forming up the first attack wave of smaller birds. These can be shot out of the sky with the missiles, but soon they are dropping their eggs. You can shoot these too, using the missiles and lasers, in between dodging the swooping birds. The eggs which successsfully reach the ground burrow in and you must lay a mine over their nest before they hatch, which blows them up when they emerge. Those that you fail to kill fly off, although you can still get them if you're quick before they disappear off the screen to wait their moment.



Lay mines, shoot the laser,f ire missiles, kill aliens — a housewife's work is never done. HAWKS.

GENERAL

There are a large number of keys to control the game. Alternate keys on the bottom row from **Caps Shift** to **Break/Space** move the vehicle left or right. Any key on the second row fires the laser. Any key on the third row fires a missile and any key from the top row lays a mine.

CRITICISM

'Hawks is basically a souped-up Galaxian with good colours and graphics. I thought there were too many firing keys, especially as the laser was not much use. You're probably better off with the missiles and land mines only. But there's plenty to do what with the eggs falling, hatching, swooping suicide birds and the fast hawks.'

'There's a nice title screen and comprehensive instructions after a short load. The keyboard layout is very good and well thought-out. ***Hawks*** *does seem to have taken a Galaxian type game and added a few more features. All the colours are used and in a very good way in the graphics, which use many UDG. This is a difficult game to master, which won't bore you too soon. Addictive.'*

'A very busy screen with smoothly moving graphics and plenty to do. The laser doesn't seem very effective, and anyway I was too occupied shooting birds with missiles and laying mines to get all my fingers round the keys. This is a good advancement on the Galaxian game.'

COMMENTS

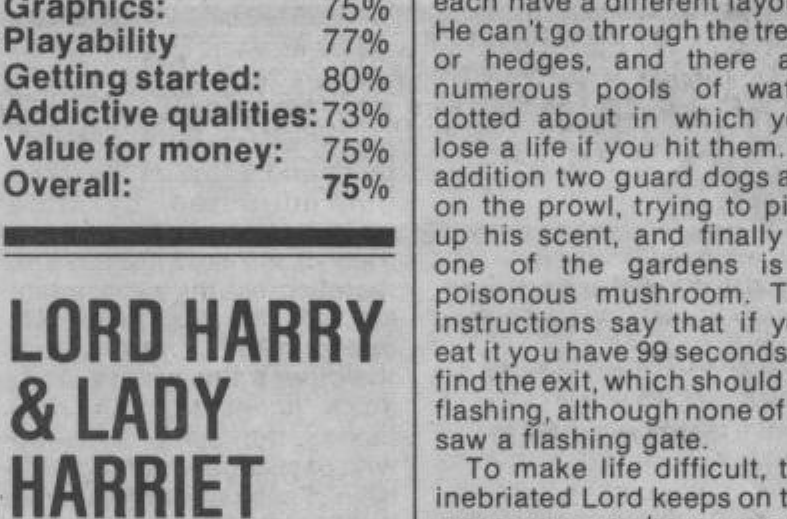
Keyboard positions: good if one too many
Joystick options: none
Keyboard play: responsive with fast movement
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: good
Sound: average but put to realistic use
Skill levels: not known
Lives: six
Screens: multiple
General rating: good

Use of computer:	70%
Graphics:	75%
Playability	77%
Getting started:	80%
Addictive qualities:	73%
Value for money:	75%
Overall:	**75%**

LORD HARRY & LADY HARRIET

Producer: **Lotus-Soft**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£4.95**
Language: **machine code**

LORD HARRY, adrift on a sea of booze, heads for a puddle.



Non-sexist games are becoming the rage it seems, although none of us could make up our minds whether having a side for men and a side for women makes a game non-sexist. In any case, **Lord Harry** has had a spot too much to drink whilst staying the night at his old school chum's house, and now he wakes up in the morning a little the worse for wear and trying to find a way out of the four ornate gardens. Should you feel strongly about it you can load the other side of the tape and hey-presto, its **Lady Harriet** who finds herself in the identical situation.

THIS IS WHAT YOU DO

Using the four directional keys, Lord Harry walks, or rather trots, round the garden eating mushrooms to keep up his strength. The garden has four gates, each of which leads into one of the other three gardens. They each have a different layout. He can't go through the trees or hedges, and there are numerous pools of water dotted about in which you lose a life if you hit them. In addition two guard dogs are on the prowl, trying to pick up his scent, and finally in one of the gardens is a poisonous mushroom. The instructions say that if you eat it you have 99 seconds to find the exit, which should be flashing, although none of us saw a flashing gate.

To make life difficult, the inebriated Lord keeps on the move once you have pressed a key, so he can be damned difficult to control in a tight spot and Lady Harriet has the same sense of aristocratic dash about her.

GENERAL

The keyboard positions are well laid out, with left/right on alternate keys of the bottom row, down is all keys on the second row, and up all the keys on the third row. 1 starts a game, 3 and 4 hold and restart, 0 quits.

CRITICISM

'This game has the same instant visual attractions as Hungry Horace, but the lack of skill levels, or increasingly difficult mazes, limits its addictivity a little.'

'There is a good use of colour and Lord Harry is nicely animated. A pity the guard dogs aren't. They just slide about, but their shapes are well drawn.'

'More of a frustrating game than anything else, and one for those with nimble fingers.'

'I get the feeling that this is aimed more at younger children than the hardened arcade addict, and at that level it is attractive, and reasonably difficult to play.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: well laid out
Joystick options: none — needs programmable joystick
Keyboard play: made difficult because of the constant movement but very responsive
Use of colour: very good
Sound: continuous but averge
Skill levels: one
Lives: five
General rating: generally regarded as fun if not madly addictive

Use of computer:	**60%**
Graphics:	**65%**
Playability:	**65%**
Getting started	**70%**
Playability:	**55%**
Value for money:	**60%**
Overall:	**62½%**

The Train Game

Producer: **Microsphere**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**

If you are an obsessive electric train set freak, or you would like to recapture those golden hours spent on the carpet rubbing rusty rails with glass paper, then fork out the price of this original game from **Microsphere** — it won't be wasted money if our reviewers' reports are anything to go by.

The Train Game presents you with a fairly complicated layout of railway lines, seen from above. In the simplest level one train chugs about the system and your task is to guide it correctly between the three stations, picking up passsengers. There are 25 sets of points which you must look after. These are switched by pressing the appropriate key — all the points are given a letter of the alphabet. If nothing else, this very rapidly teaches you the keyboard layout! Switching a set of points under a train, or not setting them correctly in the first place, will result in a derailment and a loss of life. (You get murdered by irate passengers!) To stop a train in the next station you merely press the appropriate key. On the first level with one train, the key is **1** (blue), the other trains are **2** (red) and**3** (magenta). As time passes the stations fill up with passengers waiting for a train. These are little bowler hats with legs (it's a commuter system, obviously). If they have to wait too long a few of them turn white with rage and are likely to hijack the train with catastrophic results! Your score is directly related to the numbers passengers you manage to collect.

There are several levels of play, with numerous sub-levels between them. Collecting 25 passengers moves you onto the next sub-level. In some cases runaway goods trains (black) appear and must be directed back the way they came to get rid of them.

CRITICISM

'The Train Game is definitely going to appeal to "train buffs". It's good fun to play and on the higher levels requires great concentration if you are to avoid disaster.'

'It's not often that you get a cassette for review that's such instant fun! Nor a game that when you next look at your watch three hours have passed without your noticing. Like so many very good games, **The Train Game** *is simple in idea but sophisticated in its details. For instance, when you have all three trains running and your eyes are darting everywhere to make sure the points are okay, you then have to worry about the passengers - some may be white with anger at the delays, but the other are coloured like the trains, anc they only want that colourec train!'*

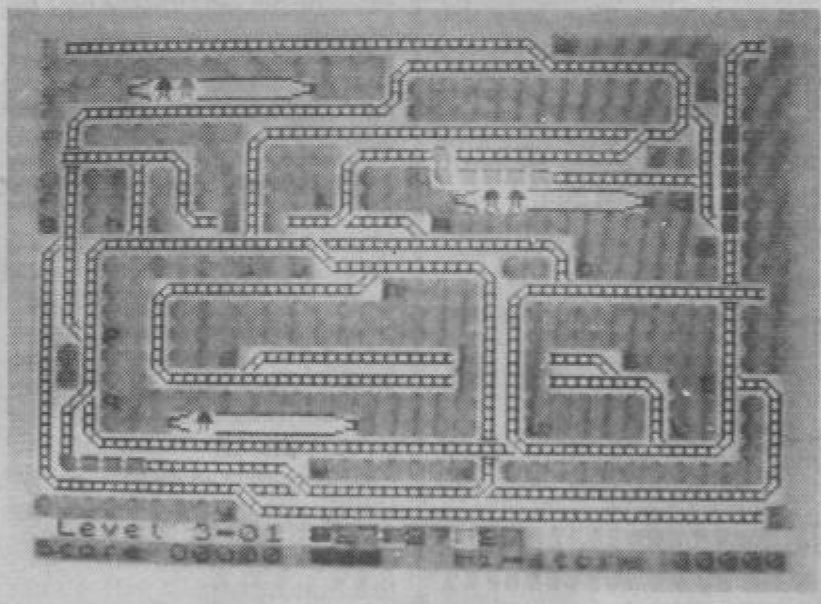
'With seven levels of play and five sub-levels in each there is plenty of variation. At the top level of play the track layout gets even more complicated as well as the speeds increasing. The graphics are cute and to the point. I liked the sound of chugging trains but if it drives you mad there is a facility for turning it off. Perhaps they should send this tape to British Rail as a training course.'

'Could this be the end of train sets as we know them?'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: uses most of the keyboard
Joystick options: impossible and not required
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: average to good
Sound: very good, on/off facility
Skill levels: seven (with five sub-levels on 1-6 and nine sub-levels on 7)
Lives: four
Screens: two track layouts
General rating: very good

Use of computer:	**60%**
Graphics:	**63%**
Playability	**85%**
Getting started:	**75%**
Addictive qualities:	**85%**
Value for money:	**85%**
Overall:	**75½%**



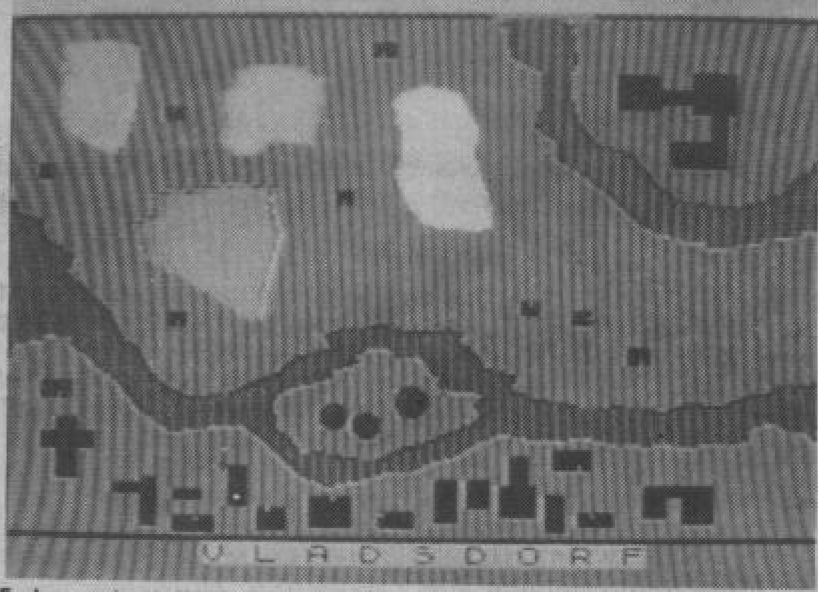
'The 8.15 from Brighton is just arriving at platform 4'.

VAMPIRE VILLAGE

Producer: **Terminal**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Docimodus** (?)

Adventure games are really coming on apace as regard originality of presentation. *Vampire Village* bears a very vague similarity to Phipps Associates' *Greedy Gulch* in as much as a town, or village in this case, is the setting, and you see a visual map of it. But there any resemblance ends. For here the entire village is laid out like an ordnance survey map, every building is shown, its doorway and shape, there's the river beyond, the fields of crops beyond that, the red coloured cliffs and on top, the castle belonging to the vampire in question.

The story so far is a sad and familiar fable, there's this village sitting on the banks of the **River Ripple** plagued by a **Vampire** who



Early morning in VAMPIRE VILLAGE and the shops are opening.



dwells in the castle above the **Red Cliffs**. You are the **mayor of Vlasdorf** and your task is to recruit volunteers, equip them and direct their attempts to rid Vlasdorf of its unwelcome predator. Usual vampire rules apply, i.e. stake sthrough the heart, no flying by day, garlic keeps him at bay. He's invisible at night except for his eyes.

The game is played with a full screen map of Vlasdorf and the surrounding area. When you start a volunteer crops up immediately and you must decide how much of your £999 budget to give him for equipment. The volunteer appears as a tiny dot in the village, wandering around. He is directed by way of the cursor keys. As soon as 9.00am arrives, all the village doors open and the shops are ready for business. If you guide your volunteer into a shop the display changes to text, informing you where you are and what's for sale at what price. Food is essential if you want your man to remain alive, and don't forget the garlic! Other essential equipment includes a means of crossing the river, for if you let your man wander into it, he drowns (and you lose the money you gave him)! If he's not equipped sufficiently before night falls and the shops close he may well die.

During the game essential commands can be inputted by using the abbreviations **B**uy, **E**at, **G**et, **H**ide, **I**gnore, **K**ill, **L**ook, **S**leep, **W**ake, **P**layer status lets you know what your man is carrying, how he feels, and his defences (holy water is pretty good for defences).

CRITICISM

'This is a real time graphic adventure. It has instant appeal but because it is very slow you get the feeling nothing much is going on. It's well worth trying out all the command words as the program does respond with information that would otherwide remain hidden. To be honest I thought the game held more promise when I started than I did after half an hour of playing it.'

'*There is a feeling of being drawn into this village. The very pace is misleading at times. It seems quite slow, bieng in real time, but your volunteer is quite hard to manipulate when he's in among the shops and houses. The trouble with him is that he has a mind of his own. Once you've got him in somewhere, he tells you what's there, but leaves you with no time for thought, and he's off in a flash. If there's something you would like to buy or examine, you have very little time to make up your mind as to its worth. Perhaps my biggest complaint it that there seems to be little sense of danger in the game. The vampire takes so long to get anywhere and doesn't do much when he does arrive, that there is no pressure on the player.*'

'In *Vampire Village* the layout gives you the odd sense of sitting in a helicopter hovering above a seemingly real life drama, manipulating its inhabitants. It does have a mesmerising quality which I like. The graphics are attractive although there is no animation involved beyond the moving dot of your volunteer, the eyes of the vampire and the opening and shutting of doors. A touch I particularly liked was the sound of your volunteer kncoking at every door he reaches.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard play: responses seemingly slow at times
Use of colour: good, but night sequences could have been 'darker'
Graphics: clear text, well presented, good map
Sound: minimal but well used
Lives: depends on how you spend your money
General rating: above average, unusual type of adventure

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	58%
Playability	73%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	50%
Value for money	51%
Overall	63½%

PLUGGIT

Producer: **Blaby**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code compiled**
Author: **Rob Jones**

Games which plunge into the very psyche of Uncle Clive's little computer seem all the rage these days. The hero of this particular jaunt is young **Percy Pluggit**. Percy's an I.C. chip who has got himself lost in a maze of circuitry far away from his homely I.C. socket.

There are two coloured keys to find which will, when put into the right keyhole, unlock the correct door. Unfortunately they must be done in the right order. The maze is full of resistors, diodes and capacitors which are chasing poor Percy, and his energy, which starts at 1200, runs down very rapidly. On top of that the walls of the maze are electrified, which fries Percy like bacon.

CRITICISM

'*Pluggit* isn't as exciting to play as *Gotcha!* Perhaps because there are such a lot of maze type games around. But it isn't that easy either. The maze area is very large, only a small part appears in the playing area, and there are at least four electronic horrors in each screen. Your I.C. chip and his enemies all move very smoothly.'

'*Moving Percy around is a bit difficult if you are on the keyboard because the cursor keys are not an instinctive arrangement for fingers, but everything works very well otherwise. There is a firing key which sends lethal bolts of energy in the direction of movement, although you can't fire and move. Good graphics, a worthy maze game.*'

'This wouldn't be that enthralling to play if it weren't for the electrified walls, but they make everything so fraught that you suddenly realise you've been playing quite a while. Perhaps not as addictive as some other games I've seen from Blaby, but very colourful and quite playable.'

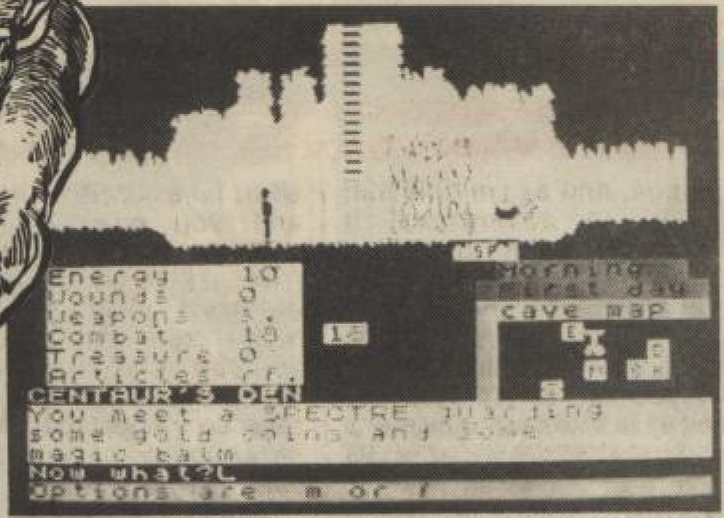
COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: cursor keys, not the best arrangement
Joystick options: AGF or Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive 4-directional movement
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: quite good
Sound: average, good end of life sound
Skill levels: 1 against the clock
Lives: 3
General rating: an average to good game, good value, but could have done with a start key — autostart loses you getting ready time.

Use of computer	58%
Graphics	60%
Playability	63%
Getting started	62%
Addictive qualities	65%
Value for money	68%
Overall	62½%



THE ORACLE'S CAVE



Run or fight? It's all choices, choices in THE ORACLE'S CAVE.

Producer: **Doric**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **Basic**
Author: **Chris Dorrell**

The Oracle's Cave isn't an epic quite on the scale of *Valhalla*, but then it's almost half the price, and for what you pay you also get animated graphics.

This is a dragons and dungeons adventure, but it is much more oriented towards the graphics than to the text, which makes a refreshing change from most of its kin. The story outline is a familiar one; you have ventured into a dark and mysterious cave complex and are trapped near the entrance. The only exit is four levels down — through the dreaded Oracle's Cave. The game provides four quests. In each you must collect forty units of treasure, these take the form of gold bars, coins and silver, each type giving you a number of treasure units. You must also collect the treasure guarded specially by the four monsters after whom each quest is named. For this sterling effort you are rewarded with no treasure points — it's simply your duty!

At the start of the game you are asked to select a quest. They are to gain treasure guarded by The Mummy, The Centaur, The Fiery Dragon or The Black Knight. Each time you play the game the layout of the caves is altered.

The way in which *Oracle's Cave* differs from so many other adventures is the way in which commands are typed in. The top half of the screen shows the cave, with an animated figure of 'you', plus any objects or monsters. The lower half shows you your energy level, wounds, weapons, combat strength, treasures and articles carried. Below that is a description of the location, then an input line, and below that a line telling you what yur options are. The options are abbreviated to **m** = move, **r** = rest, **e** = explore, **u** = use (any article carried). If you elect to move, the cursor line asks, 'Which way?', while the option line tells you: **u** = up, **d** = down, **l.** = left, **r** = right. There are also **s** = secret passageway if there is one there, and **h** = help. Both seem to return you automatically to the entrance cave.

Inputting a direction results in an animated sequence as 'you' walk thorugh a passageway into the next cave. On arriving any monster present will appear and so will the treasure it's guarding. You are then presented with a limited option of **f** = fight or move. It is not possible to move past a monster until it's been defeated. Each quest has a '5 days' time limit, and a section on the right of the screen lets you know — morning of the second day, and so on. Below that is a simple diagram of the cave showing only the locations of the four quest beasts and your position.

CRITICISM

'The animation in *The Oracle's Cave* is very good. I suppose it's difficult to avoid comparing it with *Valhalla*,

LOTUS-SOFT



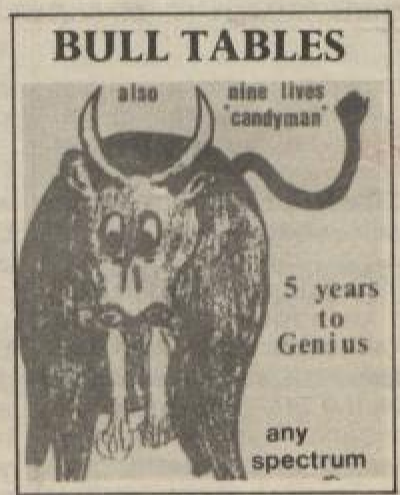
Kempston-type joystick or keyboard
100% machine code. Special animated cartoon graphics. Unique change screens features. Avoid the vicious dogs, find the hidden exit and escape. (5 star review)



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TRADE ENQUIRIES WELCOME

there's less animation here in the sense that it's only 'you' who move. A pity the monsters couldn't have been given some form of movement too. The fight scenes are fun, but I never seemed able to win any. After a battle, the wounds and energy loss combine to make you weak, too weak even to walk away, in which case you get returned to the safe cave at the entrance. Resting restores energy but loses precious time.'

'The trick with this game is to spend as much time in the entrance cave exploring. You're told that all sorts of things are appearing to be collected, which makes all the difference in a fight. Once in a cave with a monster your options are limited to fighting or running away until the monster has been defeated. The inlay card does tell you to explore, but I guess most people want to dive into the adventure, and if you do that you will be disappointed because without getting past a monster your movements are very restricted indeed.'

'Perhaps hardened adventure lovers might find this one a little limiting, since it keeps offering you menues of possibilities instead of letting you roam free as it were. I thought it made a nice change, and as I'm only half partial to adventures, it might just have an appeal for those like myself. Good clear graphics, with good movemnt from 'yourself'. One thing the inlay card doesn't tell you (which it's useful to know) is that each monster's combat strength is displayed next to your own as soon as you meet. This gives you a good idea of your chances of winning any fight. Perseverance is a virtue. I defeated a giant rat only after going through four rounds of combat. I would think this is going to be popular.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: menu given, simple abbreviations makes the program user-friendly
Keyboard play: good responses despite being in BASIC
Use of colour: sparing but good
General rating: unusual adventure type, good

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	73%
Playability	75%
Getting started	64%
Addictive qualities	60%
Value for money	70%
Overall	70%

MAZIACS

Producer: **DK Tronics**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Don Priestley**

Maziacs puts **DK** back on top form again in a highly colourful and eventful maze game. The aim is to enter the maze and find the gold, then bring it safely out again. You are told that the gold may be anywhere, but at least 200 moves from the starting point. Embedded in the maze walls are several useful items like food and swords, and here and there a few prisoners who, despite their incarceration, seem to know the way to the treasure. You get what you want by trying to move into the square occupied by the object (or prisoner). The food is essential if you aren't to die of starvation, and the swords are also essential if you want to survive the dreaded **maziacs.** These spidiferous creatures ramble about all over the place, sometimes in packs. Sadly a sword can only be used once, so avoid the packs — they move like greased lightning even in the lower levels of play.

If you ask a prisoner the route to the gold he tells you by turning the path yellow. This you can follow for a short time before it blinks out and you must then find another prisoner. Once the treasure has been discovered your problems really start. For one thing you can't carry a sword and the treasure at the same time, so it's best to try and kill off as many maziacs as you can on your way in.

A useful feature is called **VIEW.** The section of the maze on screen is only a fiftieth of the total, but pressing the key for **VIEW** lets you see a twelfth, and includes positions of swords, prisoners and food as well as maziacs. There are play levels where you can dispense with such cissy aids as this!



Still a tiny portion of the total maze, the VIEW facility.

CRITICISM

'All the instructions are on screen, but they are very good and helpful. Although the keyboard layout is sensible you can opt to define your own keys. This is a sort of maze adventure and it's a good one. The graphics are excellent with plenty of animation — it's fun and addictive to play. I also liked its large library of comments when you lose a life.'

'Everything is very clear and colourful. The game has instant appeal because of its graphics. "You" are very well animated tapping your feet when standing still, even squatting down in boredom if you don't move for a while. The maziacs are also nicely done – they look and move in an evil way. If you encounter one (which you will) then the battle is fun to watch. Bound to be a success.'

'Plenty of appeal, with lots to do and good animation. Helpful touches like the **VIEW** facility can be a mixed blessing since you can't move while looking at the larger map, but the maziacs can! Addictive.'

Amazing MAZIACS gathering to do battle with 'you'.



COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: good, but user-defined as well so you can set up for AGF and Protek
Joystick options: Kempston and cursor controllers via user-defined
Keyboard play: slightly hesitant
Use of colour: good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: continuous and imaginative
Skill levels: four
Lives: one
Screens: scrolling maze, set up randomly each game.
General rating: highly recommended

Use of computer:	80%
Graphics:	78%
Playability:	84%
Getting started:	80%
Addictive qualities:	88%
Value for money:	82%
Overall:	82%

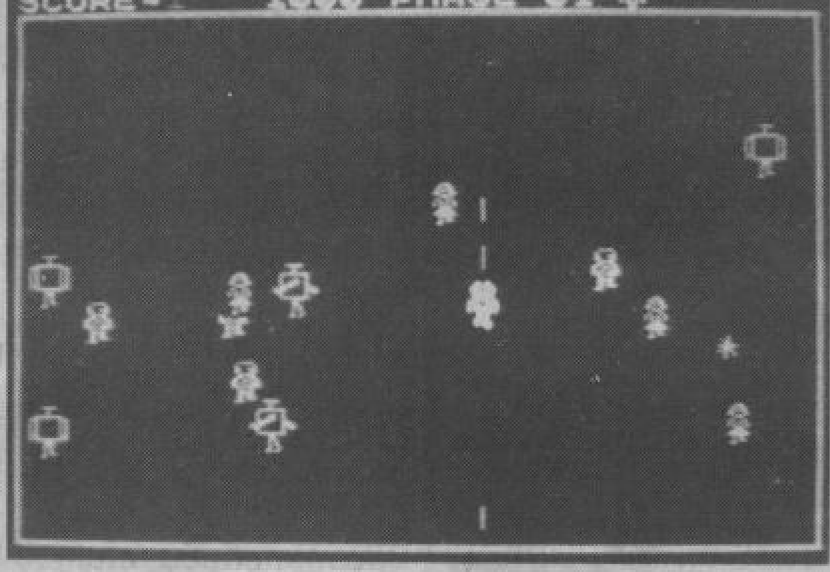
Exterminator

Producer: **Siversoft**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **I Morrison & D Anderson**

As the Exterminator your task is to rescue life, the universe and everything from no less than seven types of crazed robot in this Berserk type game. Learning the robot types is rather important as they all have different attributes; Block robots aren't bright but they're indestructible, standard robots don't fire anything but home in on you, Brains (looking more like skulls) are intelligent and fire homing missiles, Circles despatch Saucers, and Saucers zip around firing non-homing missiles, Squares despatch

Tank Robots which follow you about also firing non-homing missiles.

After a few moments playing the screen becomes alive with moving robots. Level promotion occurs automatically when you reach sufficient points.



Health Warning! Exterminating alien robots can be habit-forming.

GENERAL

On pressing **C** before or after any game you can change the keyboard positions. There are two options, the first allows for slightly simpler control by having two rotation keys, **W/E**, a moving key, **L**, and **P** to fire; the second option uses **Z/X** left/right and **K/M** up/down with **L** to fire.

CRITICISM

'If you enjoy Berserk/Frenzy type games then this is a good and interesting variant. There's an element of strategy involved as it becomes very important to shoot up the robots in the right order, most dangerous ones first, dumb ones later.

'It seems a pity that Silversoft should have had to make a copy of a game which already has several versions, although this happens to be a fairly good one. It becomes difficult to judge them fairly. I think it's best to say — good program — too familiar a game to be entirely interesting. I did like the totally different keyboard options, as it does make for two games, since the Exterminator behaves quite differently when he's rotating and moving from when he's under the compass point movement.'

'Very well animated, large graphics, and smoothly moving in this game. 8-directional movement and good fire rate. I found it highly addictive and it certainly has lasting appeal.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: flexible
Joystick options: Kempston, AGF and Protek
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: average
Graphics: very good
Sound: average
Skill levels: 3 speeds
Lives: 3
Screens: multiple
General rating: very good

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	88%
Playability	75%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	78%
Value for money	85%
Overall	82½%

HUNTER-KILLER

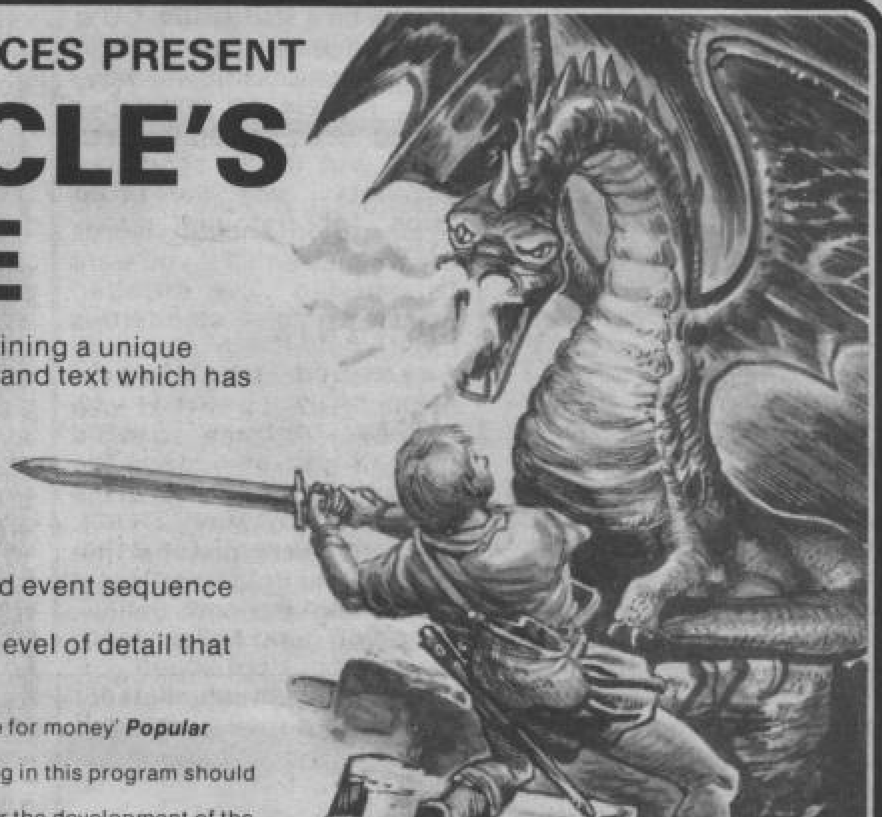
Producer: **Protek**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code and BASIC**
Author: **Rod Hopkins**

Hunter-Killer is a submarine simulation game set off the German Helegoland coast of the North Sea during the Second World War. You are commander of an 'S' type submarine and your mission is to find an enemy submarine in the same area and hunt it down. The coast is heavily mined, so sailing in too close may result in hitting a mine or running aground.

The simulation is quite detailed. Three screens show you the control room, periscope view and chart room. In the control room you can see the ballast tank level indicator, the hydro-

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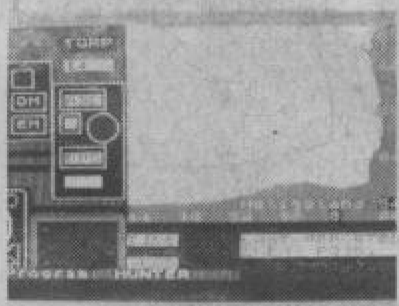
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plane angle, battery charge, engine speed, rudder angle, heading, torpedoes left, engine warning light, engine indicator, asdic display, echo sounder display, radar display, periscope, and the depth meter. The periscope view shows you the horizon and enemy shipping or aeroplanes if any are about. Below are indicators for periscope angle (which can be turned in either direction), heading, distance to enemy and torpedoes left. The chart room is accessed by pressing the **C** key — the control room slides across and is replaced by the charts. Apart from the map, details shown are tide indicator, compass rose, indication of position, minefields, enemy position, speed of submarine and tide strength.

The asdic comes on automatically at a depth of 10 feet or more and you can hear it pinging. On the surface the radar is automatically switched on. It has a range of 22 miles and you can see the sweep of the antenna.

Enemy aircraft are hunting for you. If you spend too much time on the surface they will spot you and then a klaxon sounds, giving you only two minutes to dive below 10 feet to safety. All diving and surfacing commands must be carried out properly as in a real submarine. So too must the firing of torpedoes. Another realistic feature is the use of twin engines, diesel for on the surface and electric for under water. Using the diesel underwater results in damage. If you stay under water too long the electric engine's batteries will run down and require recharging on the surface.

This game can be played with two Spectrums each fitted with Sinclair Interface 1 and their own tv screens. Then each player has his own submarine and can pit his wits against the other. The game includes instructions for solo and dual play. Timing and synchronisation are obviously very important in this unique mode to avoid error reports popping up.



The control room (part seen) is to the left of the map room.

CRITICISM

'Presentation and packaging is excellent, and the instructions are well thought out. But the trouble with real time simulations is that they are so slow; you can wait ages (i.e. 15 minutes) if the enemy is about 10 miles away, before you reach his last reported position. Overall I did not think too much of this well-boxed submarine simulation.'

'The graphics are very detailed and well laid out. It takes some getting used to all the control keys, and the responses are a little slow, but there is a lot to do to keep the submarine working and functioning safely. If you enjoy real time simulations, then you'll like this — but it isn't for the arcade freak. The game can take hours to play through.'

'A nicely presented game, with plenty of instructions. If it's a rainy afternoon, what better than to be underwater? I only felt that the periscope view might have been a bit more detailed, but it must have been tough packing all this into 48K anyway. I seem to remember seeing an ad saying this was £5.99, but it still compares favourably with the usual price for detailed simulations.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: complicated, 18 keys in use
Joystick options: Protek (naturally) or AGF for direction
Keyboard play: slow to react, but hardly essential in a real time game.
Use of colour: good
Graphics: good and detailed, but poorer in periscope
Sound: not much, klaxon, asdic and a nice gurgling if you're hit
Skill levels: 5
Screens: 3
General rating: good

Use of computer	65%
Graphics	69%
Playability	50%
Getting started	74%
Addictive qualities	50%
Value for money	58%
Overall	61%

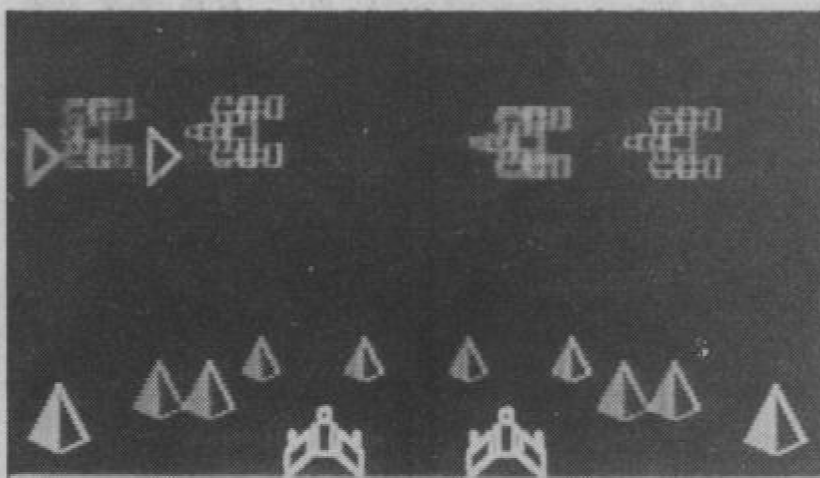
3 DEEP SPACE

Producer: **Postern**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**

3D has often been misnamed in computer games, sometimes only meaning a shape has a shadowed edge to it, but Postern's space game actually employs stereoscopic vision to create a real sense of depth. To play the game you must wear the bi-coloured spectacles provided with each cassette.

The object of the game is very simple: you command a ship which travels vertically on the extreme left of the screen and you must blast the alien space craft which travel towards it from right to left. There are various types of alien and you score points accordingly.

The novel control key is the **'zoom'** one. This sends you deep into the screen, or brings you back out. The aliens are all travelling at differing depths across the screen, front or back, and your laser only has any effect if you are at the identical depth to the alien. Similarly they only hit you if you are at the same depth as they are.



In 3 DEEP SPACE no one can see you sizzle.

CRITICISM

'It takes ages to fiddle with the tv colour, and then it does not quite work. The excellent cassette box and instructions have a lot of detail describing how to set up the tv (only colour ones work with this game) but the 3D images fail to work properly. The graphics are reasonable and the movement of the enemy drones is very smooth, but the game itself is unexciting and grossly overpriced.'

'The cassette box is impressive, the insrtuctions detailed, but I couldn't get the 3D effect to work at all. The separation of the stereo image seems too extreme. They tell you it works between 4 and 8 feet, but it doesn't. If you stand really far back it just begins to happen — but then you're too far from the computer and screen to be able to play. A good idea if it works, but too much effort went into the gimmick and not enough into the game, which is quite boring.'

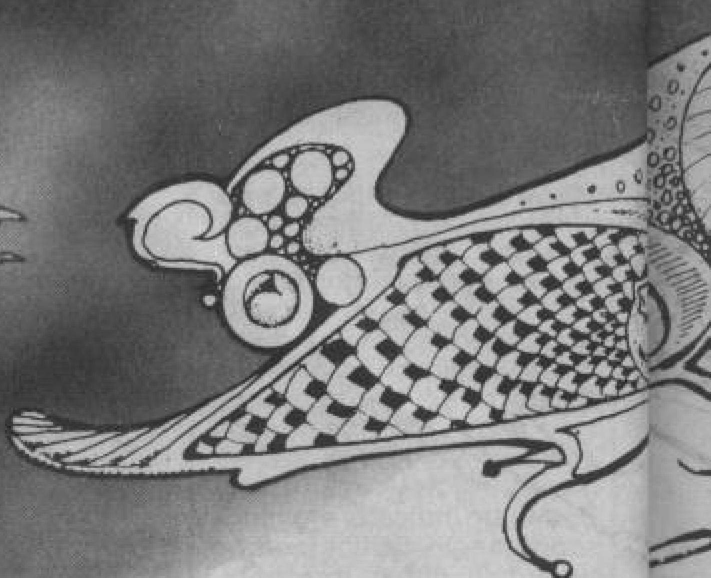
'You can play this game without the spectacles by estimating the depth of the advancing space ships by the degree of left/right image separation. Playing this way saves the headache! I'm sure the packaging and the spectacles must make it expensive to produce, but for what the game is, it's over the top moneywise.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: difficult to control with 6 keys
Joystick options: none
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: red, blue and yellow
Graphics: simple and smooth, 3D if it works
Sound: average
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 1
General rating: poor

Use of computer	45%
Graphics	55%
Playability	40%
Getting started	40%
Addictive qualities	45%
Value for money	40%
Overall	44%





Beware the Wrath of Magra!

John Edwards *hunts among the graveyard dust for some way out of the all-encompassing horror that is* **CARNELL.**

Black Crystal and *Volcanic Dungeon* are names that instantly create images of mysterious mythological fantasies. If you are an Adventure freak then they are, no doubt, names that are familiar to you as the titles of two of the most successful adventure games around.

Now, from the same team of **Roy Carnell** and **Stuart Galloway** and their company **Carnell Software,** comes a sensational new adventure unlike anything created before — *The Wrath of Magra.*

Great dark veils of secrecy cloak its development and I had to lure Roy and Stuart to a local cavern, ringing with the sounds of glasses clinking, and use that most potent of magic spells *'What's yours?'* before I was divulged any of the mysteries surrounding Magra. Such enticing tactics, smacking of film studio security, combined with the release of tempting snippets about the awful witch, have alrady resulted in *The Wrath of Magra* being tipped as the 'Ultimate Adventure' and a sure fire hit for Carnell in 1984.

It will come as no surprise to learn that as two guys who have a genius for creating adventure plots, both Roy and Stuart have a background of work in the film industry. They were both involved in the optical special effects on *Superman* after meeting special effects master, Wally Veevers at Birmingham Film School. They were naturally up to their eyes in mythology and legend when creating the surprises in the film about King Arthur and magical Merlin, *Excalibur.*

Methzar grew bitter and joined forces with the Snow Queen and her army of ice giants, and an alliance of evil was formed. Into this alliance came Magra, the witch of the Black Mountains, whose cannibalistic nature and ugliness made her the most feared witch in all the lands. Together they planned their strategy and over two years formed an army of the most grotesque creatures ever to walk the earth.
- Volcanic Dungeon

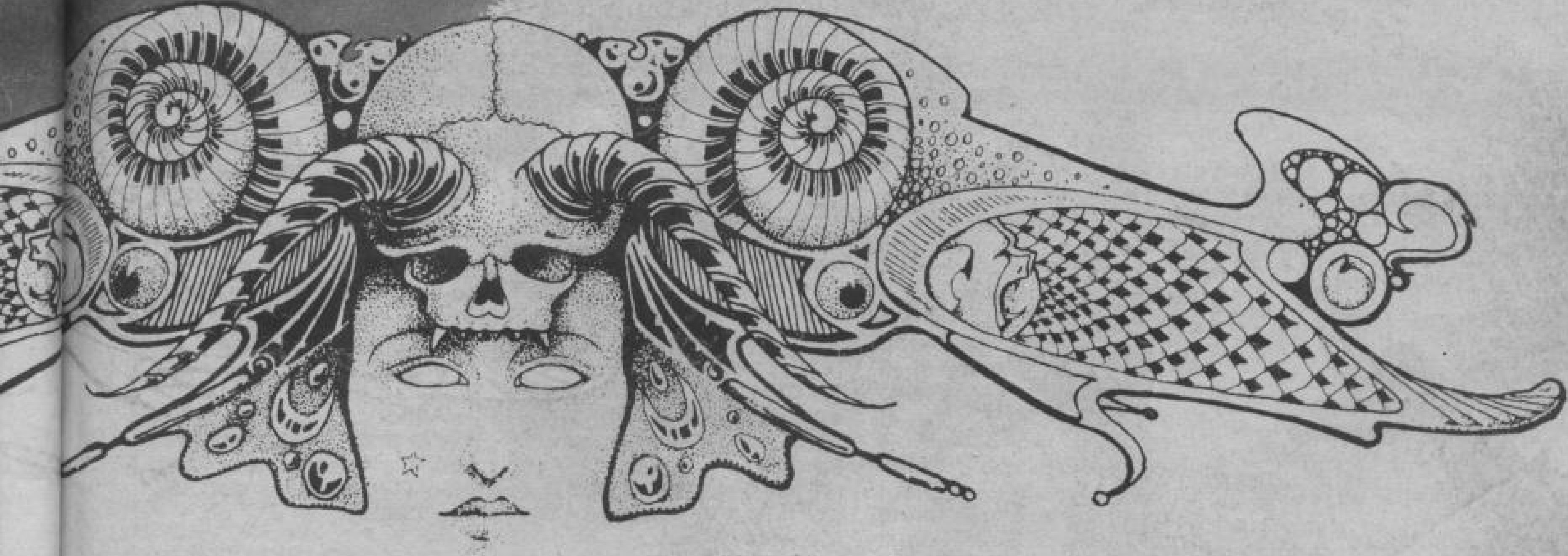
All of the Carnell adventures are centred on the European part of the **Third Continent** — the time when the great land masses of Europe, America and Africa wre all one. At the end of the **Third Age of the Third Continent**, the time of *Black Crystal*, a great battle was fought and the armies of evil were destroyed, and the balance of the forces of good and evil were restored. Now with *The Wrath of Magra* you find yourself at the beginning of the **Fourth Age.**

IN THE GRAVEYARD DUST

In the*Wrath of Magra,* you play the hero from *Volcanic Dungeon* and, as the title suggests, you are facing the anger of Magra. She's a nasty piece of work if ever you saw one, and well deserving a seat in the 'snug' at the Rovers Return! The evil old witch lives ina castle in the Black Mountains. In previous battles Magra was killed, but only in a physical sense — her body was returned to her castle by the ice giants, and now she has been brought back to life by the powers of magic. She is furious and recaptures the Princess Edora, imprisoning her in the castle.

So the stage is set for you to make a fascinating journey of days, weeks or even months, to battle with the demonic forces awaiting you. The adventure consists of two cassettes and a 200 page paperback of essential reading — more of this later. The two cassettes contain three 48K programs.

At the start of the first program you are a rather helpless, inexperienced hero, who has got to pick up some pretty sensational magical powers rather quickly if you are going to succeed in your quest. As a novice



wizard you will need to acquire knowledge, ingredients and weapons to commence your magical work and build up your prowess and confidence.

Nothing comes easily in this game. There are over 100 weapons and ingredients to be found or created before you can mount the final onslaught on the witch. Many weapons have to be formed — you won't find a Saintly Staff just lying around. You may come across a staff but then your magical powers will have to discover a dead saint and some graveyard dust to change the staff into something special.

Starting in the valley, you are reasonably safe. There is a village nearby, though it isn't a good idea to trust all the villagers. You commence your quest by finding the entrance to the mines under the Black Mountain. The game runs in real time — ten minutes playing time equals one hour, so time is an important element. Some spells can only be done at special times or at a certain phase of the moon.This could mean waiting for a month! But don't worry, you can 'fall asleep' and bang goes eight hours. Buit watch out — nasty things can happen while you are sleeping!

Once you get into the mines in part two you will need all your knowledge and weapons from part one to combat more than forty monsters and supernatural beings as you force a path towards Magra's castle. It's a decidely disquieting experience.

Scoring is continuous throughout the game and you must watch many things. Your **physical strength** must not fall too much and you must sleep every 48 hours. **Physical strength** and **faith** get boosted when some magical spell goes successfully, and the reverse is also true. **Wounds,** naturally, can mount up in the various battles. And not least, your **gold pieces** need careful guarding as you never know when someone might want a bribe!

If you have got this far it will have meant making many references to the 200 pages of magical information contained in the accompanying book. As the adventure takes a long while to play you will probably be saving the game at an appropriate moment and disappearing up to bed with the book to plan the next day's campaign, hone up your magical spells and generally swat up on the Third Continent. Only when all this has become second nature are you ready for the third and final stage. You have made it through the mines and at last Magra has you just where she wants you — on her own territory, in the castle.

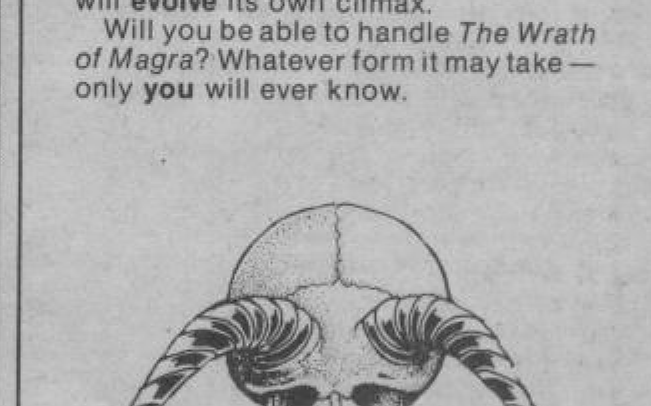
She will pop up anywhere, any time, setting traps and being thoroughly unpleasant. If she fights you must defend yourself. She is all-powerful in her own domain, so you are going to need every ounce of protection and knowledge to win the final conflict.

But all the surprises are not over yet! Only by the powers of alcohol did I prise from Roy and Stuart the wicked twist of fate awaiting you. It's new, it's devilishly cunning — it's **Evolution**. In the final stages the monsters awaiting you are creations of pure computer science. Your Spectrum takes control to create unknown perils, things beyond even the wildest dreams of the programmers themselves. Every game will **evolve** its own climax.

Will you be able to handle *The Wrath of Magra*? Whatever form it may take — only **you** will ever know.

Looking suitably evil, **Stuart Galloway** and **Roy Carnell** fend off the forces of good with their **Black Crystal**.





Robber

Producer: **Virgin Games**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code compiled**
Author: **Keith Mitchell**

Robber is subtitled, 'A 3-part criminal escapade to warn you off a lifetime of crime!' According to one of our reviewers they should have warned you off Robber. In many respects this game is a good sketch for a much better presentation at a later date.

THIS IS WHAT YOU DO

There are really three screens in this game, although the second contains four different sections. The first screen depicts a large room with two L-shaped cupboards in it. You're at the bottom right, a chess pawn shaped thing. In the two cupboards are a door key and a stethoscope. A third and vital object is the hidden safe key (why a stethoscope?) This safe key only becomes momentarily visible in the beam from the guard's torch. He's at the right of screen, moving erratically up and down. If you get caught in the beam you're nicked.

Having collected the three objects you proceed to the second screen, a two-part collapsing and reappearing bridge, which you must cross without falling to your death on the spikes below. Once across, the third screen presents you with a simple maze; first section under water, infested with poisonous jelly fish (watch the falling oxygen rating), second part through a dark room where you can't see the path of the maze, and infested with man-eating birds; third part a narrow corridor with deadly bouncing balls; and lastly a maze which disappears as soon as you see it, so it must be memorised. The whole thing takes places against a timer on the safe which shuts off the whole complex, trapping you if you're not quick enough.

GENERAL

The instructions on the inlay say **Z/A** for up/down and **Q/W** for left/right. They're wrong. It's actually **Z/X** for left/right and **K/M** for up/down. Objects are collected by moving onto them. One of the reviewers noted a serious problem, not so much of crashing the program as terminally freezing it. Twice in a row it froze on hitting the **Z** key and had to be reloaded.

CRITICISM

'Overall the graphics are very basic looking, though adequate for the idea, but they move at a very **BASIC** speed. In fact it's such a slow process that the game becomes frustrating and not in a good way.'

'An awful lot depends on luck rather than any playing skill. The collapsing bridge is very random, and the jelly fish just pop up and then disappear again, so its luck that gets you through. Neither jelly fish nor man-eating birds pose any real danger in the sense that they go for you.'

'The response to pressing a key is so slow that skill plays very little part in this game. I thought the graphics were primitive and there was no sound to speak of. Surely more could have been done with 48K than this?'

'Although you only get one life in the first screen, once into the second and third there seems to be no limit, you can go on and on.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: sensible
Joystick options: none
Keyboard play: very slow
Use of colour: average
Graphics: fair
Sound: hardly any
General rating: poor

Use of computer:	50%
Graphics:	45%
Playability	43%
Getting started:	65%
Addictive qualities:	50%
Value for money:	35%
Overall:	**48%**

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Quetzalcoatl

Producer: **Virgin Games**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Gareth Briggs**

Quetzalcoatl was one of the most important Aztec gods. The inlay tells us he was the God of Life and Art. However he's neither at the beginning nor the end of this 3D maze game, so one presumes he was chosen for the title because his name is better known than the other three who appear with him.

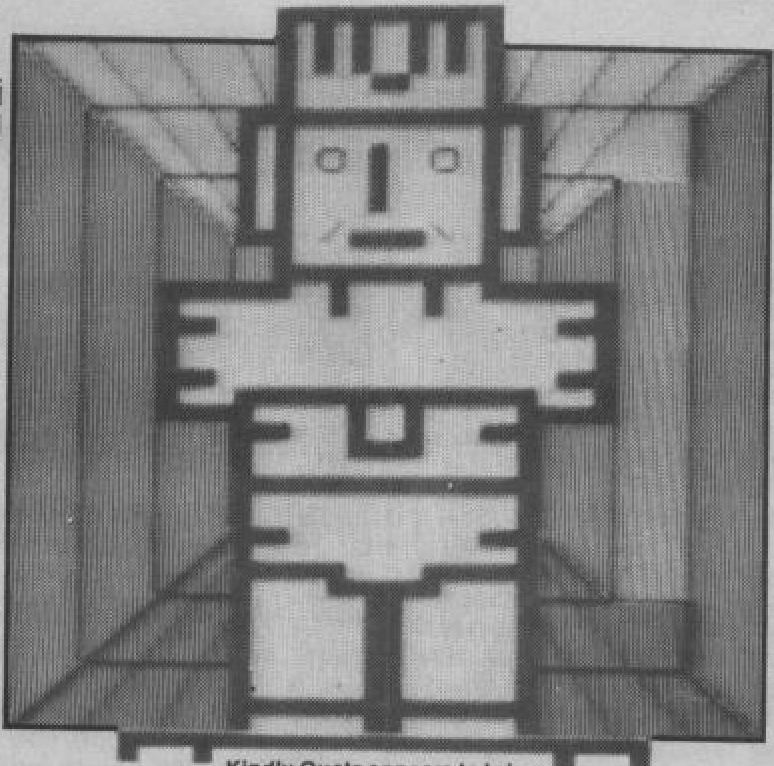
As the story goes, you've been searching for the mysterious Temple of Quetzalcoatl for three months, when your party is set upon by a group of bandits, who foully murder your compatriots. For you, there is something worse in store — you're to be cast from the Holy Place, and you wonder whether they can mean the Temple of Quetzalcoatl. Well you guess right, and the next second there you are, alone in the passageways of the first level.

THIS IS WHAT YOU DO

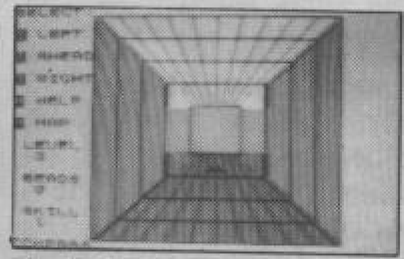
There are four levels to the temple and you have to descend through them by finding a blue shaft. There aren't all too many of these around, but there are plenty of black shafts. Actually black shafts are okay too, but they damage the beads you're carrying. Beads? Yes, beads. It seems kindly Quetz litters them around the place in neat piles and you can collect them by walking over them. They're useful in case you find the exit — you can trade them with the native who will kill you if you haven't enough.

Each level has a godly guardian. On the first it's **Huitzilopochtli** (fortunately you don't have to type these names in) who is the Wayfarers' God. If you meet him he will give you a map. Level two is the abode of **Tlaloc,** the Rain God who wanders about with four pitchers of water. You've got to pick the right one, otherwise he'll kill you — all in all he's not a pretty pitcher! The third level belongs to good old Quetz (he of the beads) and he'll give you a flute and teach you a short tune. This is just as well because on the final level is **Tezcatlipoca** the Sun God who will kill you unless you can play a short tune on a flute. After that it's a question of how many beads have survived the black shafts. There's always less beads as you progress from level to level.

The map is a mixed blessing too. Every time you use it, it disintegrates a bit more until it's finally all eaten away. When you get to a new level it is renewed and promptly starts vanishing again.



Kindly Quetz appears to bring you a map.



The 3D view of the temple of QUETZALCOATL.

GENERAL

There are six skill levels with an increase in difficulty between one and four. Level five has no map to help and level six has no compass either. The compass is collected by walking into Huitzilthingie along with the map.

CRITICISM

'This is a playable game, well programed, and which manages to produce a fair 3D effect of the corridors.'

'The 3D is quite good, with positive movement from the three directional keys. There's enough movement to give a feeling of progressing down a corridor. The maze is nicely complex too. I never came across a blue shaft, so it was shattered beads all the way. The more you walk around, the more black shafts appear everywhere, and when you have gone down a level, they remember to make the black holes appear at the right places in the ceiling too. That said, the game doesn't really offer any violent sense of excitement, and plodding through blue and purple corridors, collecting beads gets to be boring.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: 1/2/3 = left/ahead/right
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: good 3D effect
Sound: average, with entry beeps
Skill levels: six
Lives: one
Screens: four
General rating: an average 3D maze game, with better than average graphics

Use of computer:	**60%**
Graphics:	**60%**
Playability	**56%**
Getting started:	**65%**
Addictive qualities:	**40%**
Value for money:	**55%**
Overall:	**56%**

TRAXX

Producer: **Quicksilva/Salamander**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Jeff Minter**

Jeff Minter's second offering via the Game Lords was generally thought to be somewhat better than *Gridrunner.* One of our reviewers disliked it, but the other two considered it to be a reasonably playable game. The title could be misleading in that it sounds like another grid or light cycle type game, but in fact it is a painter type.

THIS IS WHAT YOU DO

Traxx presents you with 30 boxes, five high by six wide, with wide tracks between each. At the base of the bottom centre box the track is painted purple with a little green cursor, which is you. As you move the cursor from the purple colouring and onto 'unpainted' track, the cursor drags the colour behind it. As in most painter games there are a number of pursuers darting about at random. It all seems quite straightforward until, with an imaginatively elastic snapping sound, the painted bit shoots back to where you picked it up like a rubber band.

After a few abortive efforts you realise that you are only able to paint as far as three sides of a box at a time. Surrounding a box correctly rewards you with a little bleep and you are free to drag the paint out around another box.

There are nine skill levels and nine speeds in a flexible combination; you can have between one and nine pursuers on any of the speed levels. Starting with one and one, if you clear the screen the next level will give you two and two. These can all be selected by a neat key press type menu. Alternatively a two player game option is offered.

GENERAL

There are no instructions in the inlay card, but all the necessary detail are well presented in the program. The keyboard positions are sensibly placed; **Q/A** = up/down and**I/P** = left/right. In the two-player game the cursor colour changes between players and the scores shown.

CRITICISM

'The graphics are good quality, with smooth move-

ment, but the game is very difficult to control. It's too easy to overshoot a junction instead of turning off. If you over run the end of a block you cannot turn back and paint it in. This makes the game difficult in a silly sort of way.'

'I liked the selection of speed factors etc, by holding down the Z, X, C keys and releasing them when the desired number is displayed.'

'Simple in outline, *Traxx* is nevertheless a game of some skill and nerves, especially when there are four or five pursuers darting about.'

'There's a touch of the pacman in it. If you join up the four corner boxes, you're given 10 seconds to eat the chasers.'

'I thought it was well designed, using a well-tried format, but with no real innovation of its own.'

COMMENT

Keyboard positions: easy to use and sensibly placed
Joystick options: AGF, Protek, but it was felt by all three reviewers that the keyboard was actually easier to use for control
Keyboard play: difficult to control well
Use of colour: average
Graphics: good
Sound: reasonable
Skill levels: nine
Lives: three
General rating: After getting used to its idiosyncracies it begins to grow on you, but if you are looking for a painter game, there are better types on the market at a lower cost

Use of computer:	**60%**
Graphics:	**60%**
Playability	**51%**
Getting started:	**65%**
Addictive qualities:	**70%**
Value for money:	**60%**
Overall:	**61%**

BONKERS

Producer: **Procom**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **David Jones**

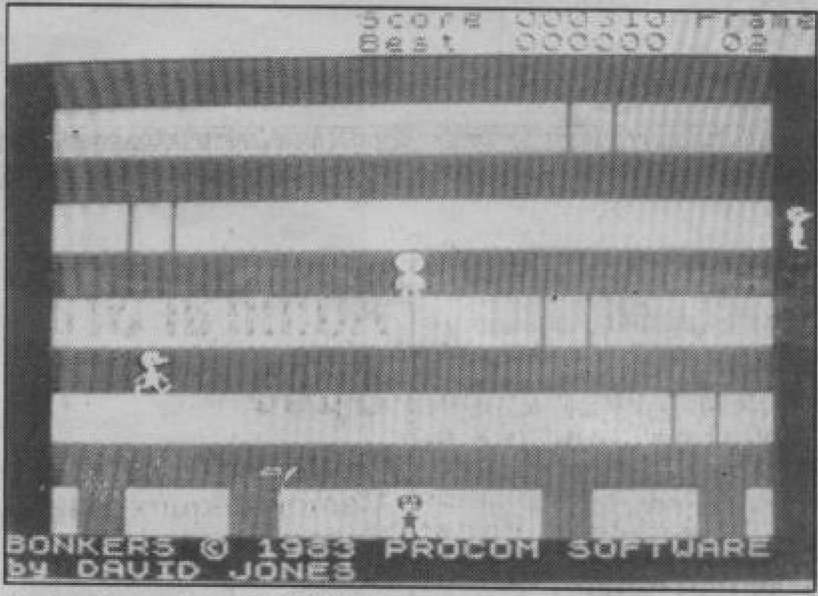
Bonkers has a cheerful inlay card and an even more cheerful title page, cheerfully disguising the fact that this game is a wolf in sheep's clothing. There is an element of the jumping platform game to it — in this case it's all downhill.

You're told that a group of earthlings have been trapped in the upper regions of an alien space station. They must reach five airlocks at the bottom to escape, but the horrible aliens are holding a creepy creatures convention (CCC for short) and they all join in to make life difficult. The CCC cast list includes Double gangers, a Pac-droid, Squidge-droid, Stomper, Baby-droid, deadly space ship (in a space station?) and two other mystery guests.

Your trapped earthlings all appear at the top of the screen in the scoring area, each one coming down via the side of the screen when the previous one has been done in. There are five platform levels, the lowest containing the five airlocks. The corridor is defined by dark blue, the thick floor by pale blue. In each floor vertical shafts move left to right and vice versa. Your man doesn't fall through the shafts, but must attempt to leap down through them. When he reaches the bottom he can jump down into a free airlock. One serious problem is that the CCC moves not only along the corridors but also through the thickness of the floors — you can get caught in the lift!

CRITICISM

'*Bonkers* is an immediately engaging game to play because all the characters are animated. Your trapped men stand at the top, waiting their turn and literally shaking in their boots, if you make an earthling run along a corridor and stop, he automatically turns round after a second and faces you, waiting for the next command. It's also good to have as many control options as are provided, two keyboard positions and two joysticks, although I didn't think the combination of E,S,D & X was all that sensible.'



Stuck in the corridors of BONKERS

'Excellent game presentation and instructions get you well started. The game sounds easy when you read them — well, I'll tell you it isn't! At screen one there is one alien trying to get you, but for every screen you clear one more alien joins in, so by screen 10 there are ten creepies after you. All I can say is that Procom have got a winner — very active, very enjoyable, playable and excellent value. Bonkers shows that a simple idea may be better than a complicated one.'

'I always liked **Imagine's** *Jumping Jack*, a wonderfully maddening game, and *Bonkers* is very similar in feeling. The animation is much more evident in *Bonkers* though. The idea is simple and relies on the piling up of odds against you the better — or luckier you are. They've also avoided the dreadful Death March music and contented themselves with an angel flapping up away from your dead earthling until it vanishes off the top of the screen. This is a really good arcade game.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: cursor keys or E,S,D,X
Joystick options: Kempston, Fuller and via the cursors, AGF and Protek
Keyboard play: highly responsive and very fast movement
Use of colour: average
Graphics: very good
Sound: good
Skill levels: increasing difficulty by the screen
Lives: 5
Screens: over 10
General rating: very good

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	74%
Playability	77%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	84%
Value for money	80%
Overall	77½%

Bedlam

Producer: **Lothlorien**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**

Named, presumably, after a favourite hot drink, the planet **Bovryll** is an asylum in which you are trapped. Wave after wave of loathsome creatures will attack you, each more vicious than the last. Fortunately someone has had the foresight to provide you with a twin firing photon bolt.

The game gets off to a promising start with an exquisitely animated figure dancing on the titles while the computer waits for you to select a level. Once this has been done the planet Bovryll materialises on the screen. Well, it is an asylum of course, which would explain why it resembles a dense but open plan maze. You're at the bottom. One critic has said that he didn't recognise 'himself' but recognition comes as soon as you fire your twin photon bolt.

You may zip about the maze if you like. All the loathsome creatures do, and they are beautifully animated. But eventually they start to file down to the left hand bottom corner (if you stay down there) and sadly follow the same route through the maze to be shot. However, as they get shot, the next one speeds up and you have to be very fast to survive. As the game proceeds creatures described as 'saucerous guards' attack. They nip about very quickly and fire at you. Shooting ten of these earns an extra life.

GENERAL

The packaging is unpretentious and the presentation of the on screen instructions is very good. Control keys are Q/Z = up/down, I/P = left/right. Fire is 0 and K allows user-defined keys, which means this could be set up easily for **Kempston, AGF** or **Protek** interfaces.

CRITICISM

'The ability to redefine the control keys is a powerful facility. In any event, the keyboard control is very responsive. Graphics are detailed and the sound effects are good.'

'The animation of the creatures is fantastic, about the best ever. The game is fun to play and very fast. It seems a pity, though, that the creatures are so easily waylaid by waiting at some corner in the right position and shooting them like cowboys coming out of a burning building. Still, I fould it enjoyable to play, but perhaps not entirely as addictive as I first thought.'

'A very playable game with smooth graphics, and it can get very, very fast in play, and highly addictive.'



COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: good as set but redefinable
Joystick options: none offered.
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: muted, but relies on gem-like sprites
Graphics: detailed and excellent
Sound: good
Skill levels: three
Lives: five
General rating: mixed feelings on addictivity, but generally regarded as good value for money.

Use of computer:	80%
Graphics:	75%
Playability:	85%
Getting started:	75%
Addictive qualities:	75%
Value for money	80%
Overall:	78%

Admiral Graf Spee

Producer: **Temptation**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **basic**
Author: **Simon Mansfield**

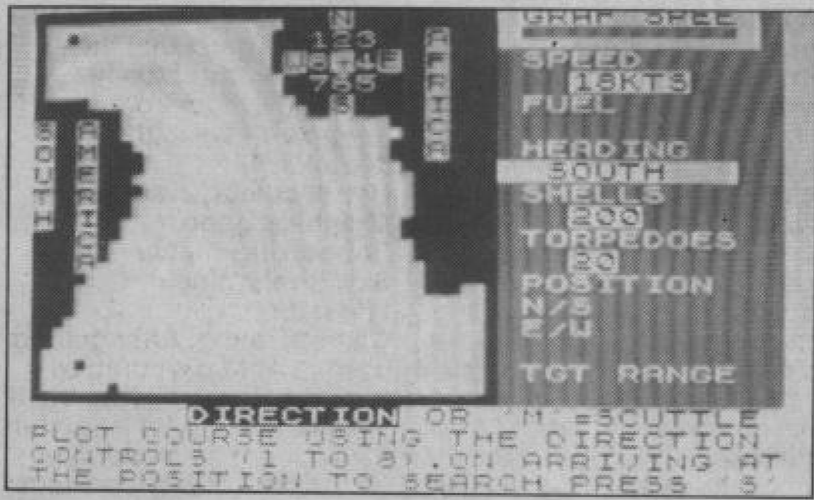
Admiral Graf Spee is a sea battle simulation set in the early days of the Second World War. The Graf Spee, of course, was the German pocket battleship which became famous when the British cornered her in Montevedeo after the Battle of the River Plate. The action of the game takes place before this, when she roved the Atlantic, sinking shipping almost at will.

THIS IS WHAT YOU DO

You are presented with a map showing land on either side and sea in the middle. The map shows your position (the Graf Spee), and the position of enemy shipping. It does not tell you whether these blips are armed or unarmed ships. To the right of the map you are given a display indicating your speed, fuel in tons, heading, amount of shells and torpedoes left, and your present position.

You can now plot your course to the nearest enemy by the compass rose set into the map by using keys 1-8 (1 being **NW**, 2 being **N** and so on round to 8 being **W**). The map then shows your movement at the 18 knots present. Once in the vicinity of your enemy you press Search, whereupon the map screen changes to a view of the sea, and the display also indicates the target's distance in yards. You must now hunt around, following the enemy ship's position until she hoves into view.

Command inputs are done by a finicky menu; fire torpedoes, fire guns, turn ship, decrease speed, increase speed. Successfully bringing the enemy into view results in his smoke appearing over the horizon, followed by the stacks, superstructure and finally the hull. As soon as you are within range you may fire either guns or use torpedoes. If the enemy turns out to be



The map screen from ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE.

armed, he will begin firing as soon as you are within his range. You can see the gun flashes on the screen followed by the water splashes for near misses. The whole screen flashes if you take a hit, and the percentage of damage done is shown at the base of the screen.

Depending on the level of play chosen, there are more or less heavily armed ships to fight against.

GENERAL

It seems a pity this program couldn't have been written in machine code, which might have resulted in more sophisticated graphics and a better response speed. There was some disagreement between our reviewers, one of whom thought the graphics were poor, another considered them to be fine. The water splashes are very blocky, as are the ship silhouttes. But the two most serious problems with the program are ones of playing. Firstly, no warship ever comes to a halt unless it is absolutely forced by circumstances. Yet in *Graf Spee* you must bring the ship to a standstill in order to succesfully fire at and hit an enemy. When we started playing, the first two enemy ships seemed to keep darting about like gadflies, and we were unable to keep them in sight for the time it took to input the new direction. Slowing down seemed to make life slightly easier, but only stopping forward movement altogether made it possible to keep the ship in sight long enough to go through the lengthy menu to fire the guns.

The second quibble is that if the enemy ships begin firing, there is nothing you can do until he breaks off for a moment. You must be ready to punch the menu input required, and then the particular commands required, which mean slowing down, turning the ship, selecting guns or torps and firing. In between each gap the enemy may start firing again and you must sit there and be hammered until another break occurs.

CRITICISM

'The keyboard play was quite slow to respond, and when the game speeds up in an attack, there are many keys to use.'

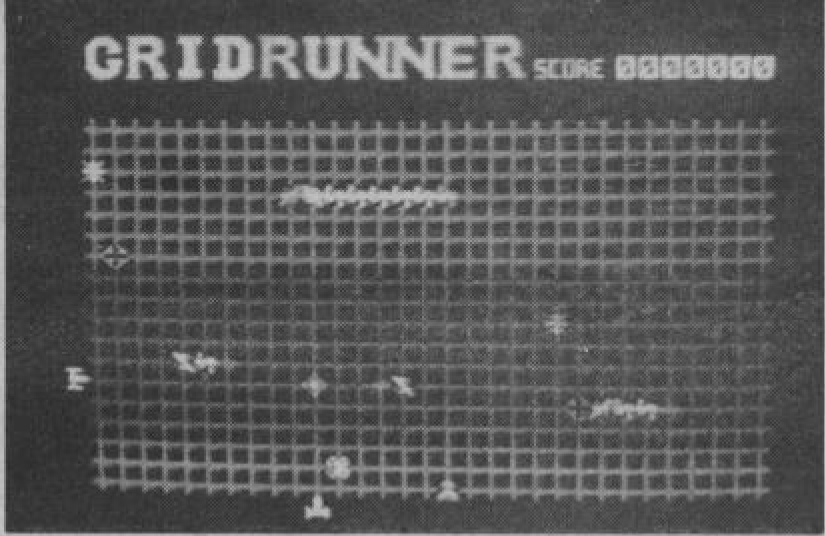
'Not unlike a naval Star Trek game, so anyone who likes those will probably find this enjoyable. Given the limitations of memory and the basic program, the graphics are reasonably imaginative and effective.'

'There are some good tunes in this game, and the whole would be better if good graphics were used and perhaps some machine code. But it's quite playable.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: Complex, but good instructions
Joystick options: none
Keyboard play: slowish
Use of colour: average
Graphics: good
Sound: good
Skill levels: seven
Lives: you can sustain up to 99% damage — then it's kaput!
General rating: Reasonably good of its type

Use of computer:	45%
Graphics:	50%
Playability:	55%
Getting started:	65%
Addictive qualities:	50%
Value for money	60%
Overall:	54%



Gridrunner

Producer: **Quicksilva/Salamander**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Jeff Minter**

With a title like *Gridrunner* you might well imagine you are in *TRON* land, back with the light cycles, but you would be wrong. This new game from the genius of **Llamasoft** is really a variation of the centipede theme.

THIS IS WHAT YOU DO

A bright red grid fills the screen, little white cursors move up the sides, apparently doing nothing, another zips along the base, firing zizag lasers up the screen, and you think that must be you (you're wrong again). A blue squiggle-dash creature speeds horizontally along the grid lines, descending one line at a time, unless it gets hit by the laser thingie, in which case it splits up, each segment going its merry way. Then you realise little yellow dots are appearing here and there. It takes a few more seconds before it dawns on you that the side ship is firing these into the screen. If the blue centipede hits them it changes direction instantly — of course, they're mushrooms! Finally, when a segment of blue reaches the bottom line and collides explosively with the quiet, unmoving little green ship, you wake up to the fact that it was you.

The main problem is that there are no instructions either on the inlay or on screen. Fortunately the three lads who reviewed this game are experienced Spectrum thumpers, so trial and error soon established that Q/A gives you up/down and I/P gives you left/right with 0 to fire. Had they their **AGF** or **Protek** interfaces plugged in it wouldn't have been a problem.

The object of the game is very similar to centipede. Your ship (the green one) can move left and right as well as up the screen for about a third of the height. The ship on the side hurls obstructions in the way of the centipede which rushes along like a runaway intercity, changing direction should it hit one. It takes several of your laser blasts to get rid of the obstructions, and, as in centipede, your laser can take out segments of the monster, dividing its attentions to alternate sides of the screen. The other ship at the base also destroys bits of the centipede, as well as you if you happen to be in the way. And that's about it.

CRITICISM

'The game is quite difficult because of the speed, but it does not inspire the player to keep playing.'

'The unchanging graphics of each screen quickly made it boring, although it was fun at the start. There's such a lot going on, and it's all very fast, but then you get into the rhythm and it becomes easy - in the end, too easy.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: sensible
Joystick options: AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: difficult to control, very fast
Use of colour: average
Graphics: small, not much imagination used
Sound: average
Skill levels: one
Lives: Five, with five more added as grids cleared
General rating: *Gridrunner* is not very exciting nor it is addictive, and at almost £7, it's poor value for money.

Use of computer:	**70%**
Graphics:	**45%**
Playability	**59%**
Getting started:	**25%**
Addictive qualities:	**35%**
Value for money:	**45%**
Overall:	**46½%**

Cybertanks

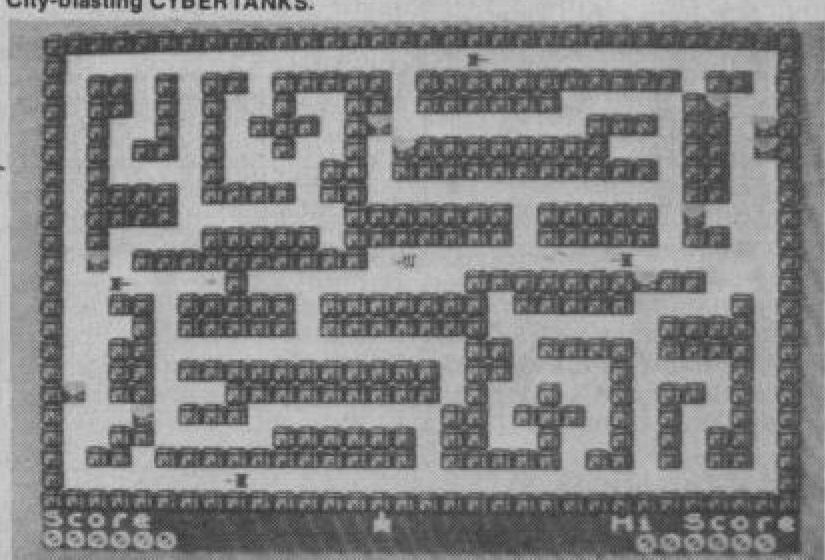
Producer: **Star Dreams**
Memory required: **16K**
Recommended retail price: **unknown**
Language: **machine code**

Tank games seem to be very popular with arcade enthusiasts. In *Cybertanks* you are presented with a complex maze representing buildings and streets. You must move around these with your tank, blasting away at the four enemy tanks. An advantage you have is that your tank can also shoot out the buildings. The enemy are pretty quick at getting you, especially on the start of a new life; you are left in the same situation which just ended the previous life and the damned enemy tank simply blasts away again. This does mean you have to keep on your toes.

The graphics are neatly done, simple one-character size blocks, but there are no exciting explosions to alleviate the muted green/brown colours. The sound, too, is quite muted although constant.

On completing the first wave the second sheet has mines, represented by small dots, which destroy anything that touches them. This is about the limit of the game's dangers, and there was a general feeling that after playing several sheets it all becomes rather repetitive.

City-blasting CYBERTANKS.



COMMENTS

Movement is by the. cursor keys or 4 = up, Q = down, P = right, O = left, bottom row to the right of V = fire. The program also runs with the **Kempston** joystick. You could use the **AGF** or **Protek** interface for movement. Putting the fire buttons on the bottom row, makes it a bit awkward to use well. Packaging and instructions are neat, and the screen title card is marvellous.

CRITICISM

'This was actually quite a lot of fun to play, but it's a pity they couldn't have given it more difficulty levels to keep the interest going.'

'Despite their simplicity, the graphics are well designed and move smoothly. Fortunately the enemy tanks dart about quite well, which adds some spice to the game.'

'Another reasonable game, but I think only average.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: Cursor, which can be awkward and a badly placed firing button
Joystick options: Kempston, AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: positive, but a stretch to fire
Use of colour: 1st reviewer liked it, 2nd thought it was average
Graphics: reasonably good
Sound: average
Skill levels: one
Lives: three
General rating: a reasonable average

Use of computer:	**65%**
Graphics:	**55%**
Playability:	**63%**
Getting started:	**70%**
Addictive qualities:	**40%**
Value for money	**55%**
Overall:	**58%**



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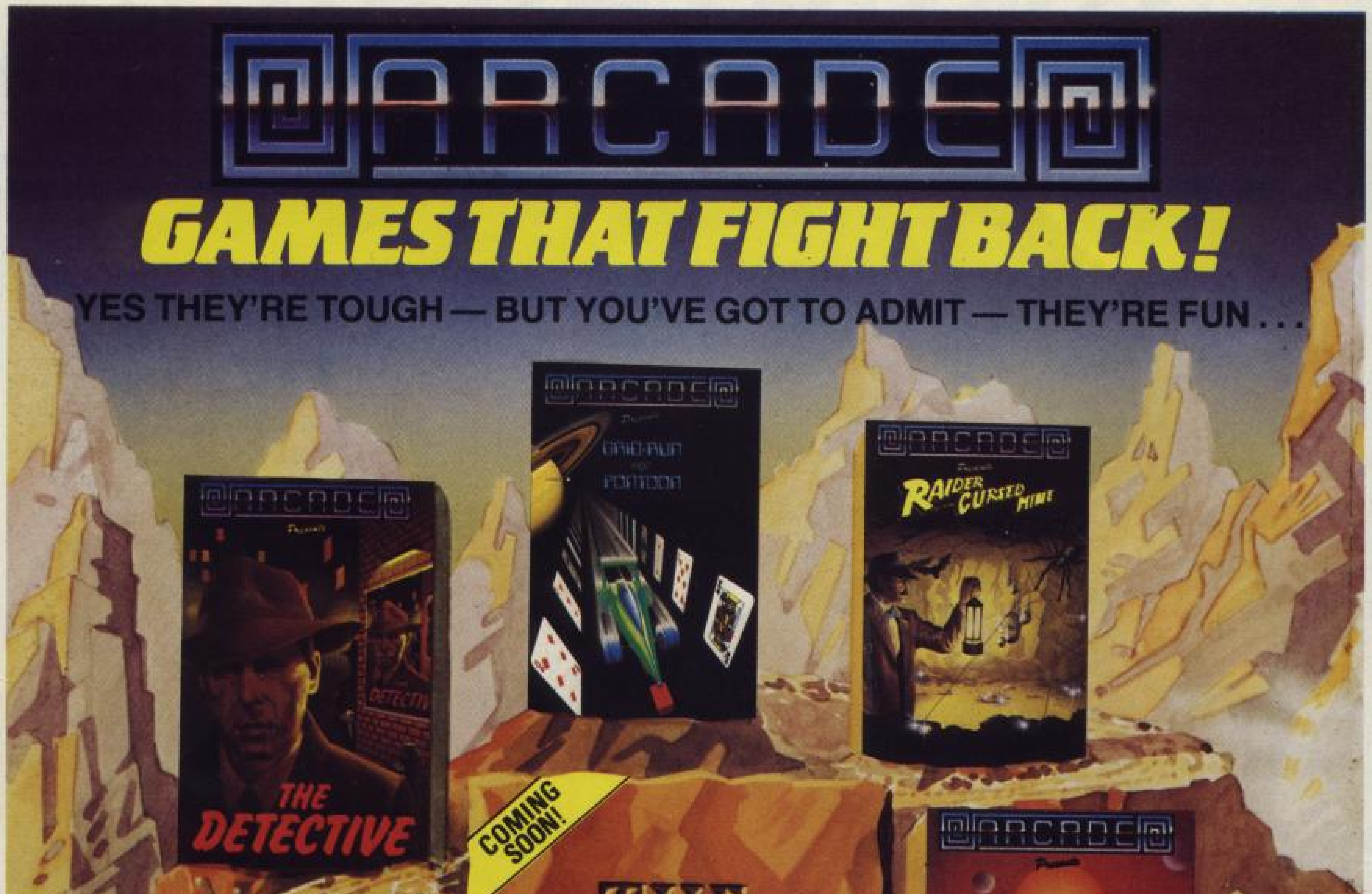
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THERE IS CUTTING GEAR IN THE SERVICE BAYS, GET IT AND RELEASE THE PEOPLE TRAPPED IN THE ENTERTAINMENT SECTION, THEN FIND VEHICLES — WE MUST LEAVE HERE SOON.
JUST WHO THE HELL ARE YOU TO GIVE ORDERS, PAL?
YEAH, AND I THOUGHT WE WERE MEANT TO STAY BY THE WRECK AND WAIT FOR RESCUERS...
MY NAME IS CROSS, IT SAYS SO HERE.
CROSS
I AM — WAS — A SHIP'S OFFICER. MY TASK IS TO GET YOU TO YOUR ORIGINAL DESTINATION — EARTH.
NO RESCUERS WILL COME —
— THE ARCADIA HIT AN ANOMALY IN HER LAST JUMP,
— IT LED TO THE BLACK HOLE WHICH ORBITS THAT RED GIANT...
THEN ALL WE GOT TO DO IS FIND A FEDERATION BASE AND...
NO BASES HERE —
LOOK AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SKY...

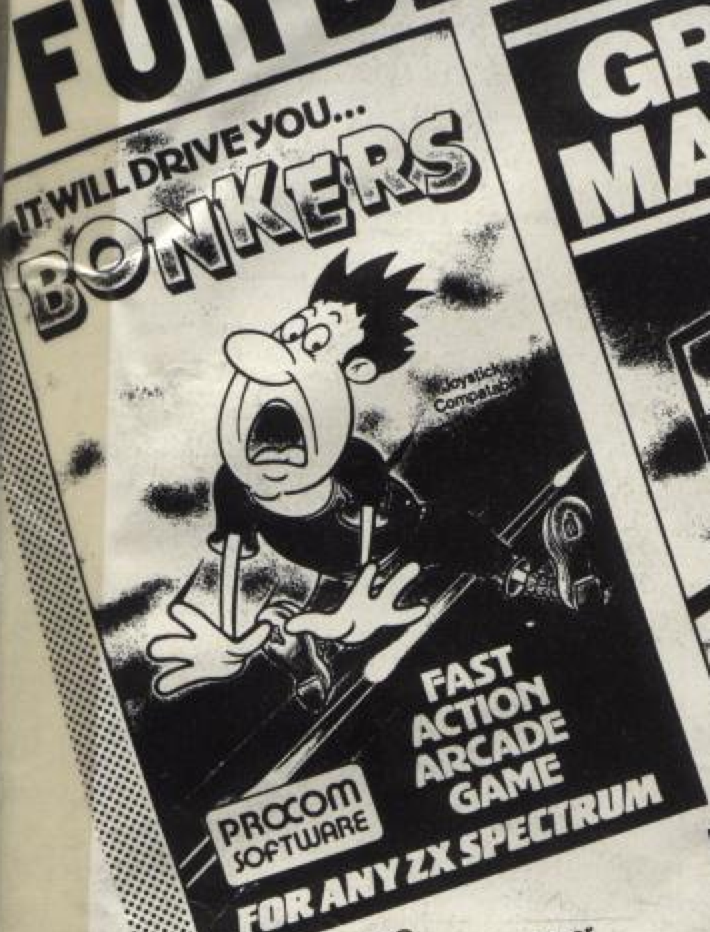
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